



THE
FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY
OF
ANGLICANISM,
OR
The Church of England
TESTED BY THE NICENE CREED.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY
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London:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,
172, FLEET STREET; DUBLIN, 16, DAWSON STREET,
AND DERBY.

1846.
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THE
FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY
OF
ANGLICANISM,
ETC.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR —,

You desire me to tell you what were my reasons for becoming a Catholic, or (as you somewhat strangely express it,) for joining the Romanist schism in this country; and you assure me that you make this inquiry, not to gratify a mere idle curiosity, still less with the determination not to be convinced, but with a real practical purpose, and an honest desire of knowing the truth. You are not, you say, extensively acquainted with patristic, mediæval, or even with modern theology; but you have for some years held what are called High Church principles, in which your reading, such as it is, has confirmed you more and more; and you have been taught further to consider these principles as the surest, if not the only safeguard, against the corruptions of Popery; but recent events, in particular the “secession” of

many educated persons, both clergy and laity, including some friends of your own, and one or two to whom you had looked with especial veneration, have caused you much uneasiness. You cannot define your doubts, for, in truth, they are hardly of a specific character; you can only say generally, that your confidence in your religious position is shaken, that each new secession startles you afresh, and that you are therefore anxious to learn, in each instance, what has led to the step taken, that so you may judge for yourself whether new questions have been suggested, or old ones put in a new light by these modern schismatics. You add, that with this view, you have looked into most of their publications; but you complain of Mr. Marshall's "Twenty-two Reasons," as exhibiting conclusions only, silently passing over the whole process by which they were attained: on the other hand, you think Mr. Newman's Essay too long and difficult, not handy enough for general use, but requiring an extensive knowledge of Ecclesiastical history for its just appreciation: Mr. Oakeley's short Letter was rather a personal apology for himself, than an exposition of principles for the guidance of others: and Mr. Faber's arguments are directed against a position with which you never sympathized, and which indeed you could never reconcile with any known rules either of logic, ethics, or theology. In a word, nothing that you have hitherto met with from the pen of any of the converts, has come home to you, as of practical service to yourself, or likely to help those many others who are in similar circumstances.

All this does not encourage me to attempt the statement you require ; for were I to do so, in all probability I should only furnish you with fresh matter for complaint ; because the path which led me into the Catholic Church is one which you have never trodden, and in which I should find it difficult to trace back to you my own steps ; indeed, I fear you will only be incredulous, when I simply state the fact, that I became a Catholic by the reading of Anglican works of controversy ; that I sat down to the study of Leslie and Barrow, an almost undoubting Protestant, and rose from it, all but thoroughly convinced of the validity of the Papal claim. Instead, therefore, of entering at present into the details of my own conversion, I think I shall better comply with the spirit of your request, by laying before you some general grounds, on which, as I believe, you and all others ought to join the Roman communion likewise. The line of argument I propose to adopt, is one which appears to me to admit of universal application, quite independently of the accidents of previous study, or of any peculiar modes of thinking. I shall only assume that you believe in the sacramental character of the Christian Church, i. e. that you believe in the existence of a visible body upon earth, the one appointed channel, whereby grace is conveyed for the restoration of fallen man, and from which it is therefore wicked and dangerous presumption either wilfully to separate, or wilfully to continue separate.

Here, at least, is common ground for us both ; and I presume you will hardly deny but that this Church must have certain outward signs or tokens, whereby

it may be distinguished from false rival societies : God has surely set some plain indications of His Presence upon that body, which is really His, and in which He vouchsafes to dwell, that so strangers may be drawn towards it, and all His sheep be gathered into one fold. The question then arises, what are these signs and tokens, the outward and visible notes of the One True Church?

Both you and I publicly declare, in one of the sacred symbols of our faith, that we believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church ; it must be fair then to test our respective claims to be considered members of God's Church by this simple rule—to which communion do these notes most unequivocally belong, to yours or to mine? the English or the Roman?

And this method of inquiry is the more satisfactory, because the notes here spoken of are easily intelligible, and answer entirely to the natural sense and judgment of our own minds. It is obvious to all, that *Unity* must be a characteristic of Christ's Church, because that Church is the depository of God's revealed truth, which must needs be one with itself, every where and always the same ; *Sanctity*, because the very purpose of Christ's coming was to destroy the works of the devil, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ; *Catholicity*, because we are told, that in Christ the wall of partition is broken down ; the new covenant was to be, not like the old one, local, national, and limited, but "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of His people Israel ;" and *Apostolicity*, because

thus only can we be sure that its doctrines and sacraments are really those which Christ taught and instituted, if we know it to be the true representative, by direct succession, of that body of Apostles who received them from Himself, inheriting therefore that Divine Warrant of their commission, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," together with the promise of perpetuity, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

Another advantage in this line of argument is its broad, general character, which saves me from being entangled in any examination of details; in truth, such an examination would be very difficult, if not wholly impossible, because I am ignorant of your present position in this matter. English high churchmen differ so much from one another, and from themselves at different times (those, at least, who have at all *gone on with the movement*), that I really do not know what are the precise points in "Roman doctrine" which you now consider to require an apology, what you are ready to concede, or what you would pass by as unimportant; e. g. one clergyman concedes the *cultus* of the saints, but cannot believe in purgatory; another holds purgatory to be both ancient and reasonable, but cannot conceive why we should pray to those who were once our fellow-men, and so on, through a graduated scale of opinions, from those who have but recently learnt to question whether Rome be really Antichrist, to those who claim to hold (or, less confidently, not to reject,) all Roman doctrine.

This, then, is the plan which I propose to follow: to

inquire which communion, the English or the Roman, corresponds most faithfully to the description of Christ's Church set down in the Nicene Creed, of "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." Let me hear that you do not object to this, that you do not consider it unfair or unreasonable, and, in my next letter, I will enter at once on the consideration of the first of these tests—Unity.



LETTER II.

IN considering the point of unity, as it concerns the Established Church of England, it cannot but be fair to look on that Church in the character which you yourself assign to it—that, namely, of a National Church, forming a part of the One Church Catholic. Looking upon her, then, in this point of view, we are naturally led to enquire how she stands in relation to the other National Churches, which, with her, according to this theory, make up the Catholic Church, and with which we should therefore expect her to be one, in "origination," in "hope," in "charity," in "discipline," in "sacraments," and in "faith;" in which six points, according to Bishop Pearson, the unity of the Church consists. Now, of these, the unity of "origination" and of "hope" may be claimed alike by all Christians of whatever deno-

mination: but, can it be said that the English Church, as a body, is one with other Churches even in the unity of charity? and is it not a fact almost too obvious to mention, that, in point of discipline and sacraments, in point of faith and doctrine, there is no one Christian society in the world, excepting only her own offshoots and dependencies, with whom she is in communion? In the years, indeed, immediately succeeding the Reformation, there was a boasted union of all the Reformed Churches, the Church of England among the rest. “Blessed be God,” says Bishop Hall,* “there is no difference in any especial matter betwixt the Church of England, and her sister Churches of the Reformation; we accord in every point of Christian doctrine without the least variation; their public confessions and ours are sufficient convictions to the world of our full and absolute agreement. The only difference is in the form of outward administration, wherein also we are so far agreed, as that we all profess this form not to be essential to the being of a Church,” “not seeing any reason why so poor a diversity should work any alienation of affection in us one towards another.” Such was the tone and temper of the English Church for many generations after the Reformation; and I suppose the great majority of her people, her clergy, and bishops, still, in some sense, make common cause with the Protestant Churches of the continent: such, at least, is the temper indicated by the recent proceedings in the matter of the Jerusalem bishopric, in

* Peace Maker, vol. viii. p. 356,

the course of which the Prussian government* was allowed to declare without contradiction, that the English Church, “both by origin and doctrine, is most intimately akin to the German Evangelical Church;” and the Bishop of London,† preaching about the same time before the King of Prussia, exhorted his hearers “not to think or speak more uncharitably of other National Churches (i. e. the Lutheran, &c.) than the fathers of their own [the English] had spoken.”

Still, however, the English Church cannot be said to be in communion with any of these; and, on some important points of discipline and doctrine, she is at variance with them all. This, indeed, you, and those who think with you, would be only too ready to admit; you would indignantly repudiate all suspicion of unity between the Church of England and the Protestant communions; your theory being, that those national bodies are cut off from the Catholic Church, while the English communion, on the other hand, is a branch of that Church, the Roman Church (under which general name are included, be it remembered, besides the Roman Church strictly so called, the several National Churches under its obedience,) being another branch, and the Greek Church a third: so that, in spite of all seeming differences, there is a real vital unity between the English and Roman communions, so close, that they may be con-

* Appendix to Mr. Hope’s “Bishopric at Jerusalem considered,” &c. p. 74.

† Sermon in St. Paul’s, Jan. 30, 1842.

sidered branches of the same tree, “parts” of the same “vineyard.”

But, my dear friend, is this anything more than a theory—a theory on paper, contradicted by the experience of three hundred years? Is not the Church of England, in point of fact, out of communion with the Church of Rome? Nay, does she not denounce that Church, repudiate some of her doctrines, charge her with idolatry, and even call her by the name of Antichrist? * And, on the other hand, does not the Church of Rome utterly deny the claim of the Church of England to be of the Church Catholic, and excommunicate all her bishops, clergy, and people as open heretics and schismatics? “These two branches not only have no formal or visible fraternity, union, or communion as churches, but reciprocally denounce each other as false, heretical, and Antichristian. We speak not of the writings, speculations, tracts, or opinions of individual ecclesiastics, but of the established and authorized documents of each of these would-be Catholic Churches, all of which confessedly go to the denial of the Christianity, Apostolicity, and Catholicity of the other.” † This is evidently the language of one who is neither an English Churchman nor a Roman Catholic; but it is, nevertheless, the language of common sense, honesty, and fairness. And, with these facts before us, I am at a loss to conceive how any one can seriously maintain the existence of vital and essential unity between the two communions.

* In the Homilies.

† Eclectic Review.

It would not be necessary to mention the Greek Church, except that it is sometimes spoken of as a possible thing to bring about "friendly relations" between it and the Church of England. But it is manifest that, in point of fact, not only is there at present no communion between them, but that, in every doctrine and practice, in which the English Church differs from the Roman, except, of course, the one question of the supremacy, she differs also from the Greek Church; therefore, it is mere unreality to pretend that she finds in the east a sympathy denied her by the Churches of the west.

But, it may be said, all this is too true; and yet this unhappy severance of England from the rest of Christendom is so far from being a token against her, that it is the consequence of her fidelity to the truth. She is separated from the Churches in the Roman obedience, because those Churches still obstinately adhere to the corruptions with which time has overlaid the pure faith of the Gospel; while she, on the other hand, having once participated with them in the same corruptions, has nobly arisen and purified herself, and now holds the faith in its primitive simplicity, as it was taught in the early ages of the Church. And she is separated from the other Protestant bodies, because, when she thus cast aside her corruptions, she still faithfully adhered to the Apostolic type of doctrine and discipline, retaining as much of the system of the existing Church as was conformable to that type; while they, on the contrary, formed to themselves a new religion, which they professed to draw straight from the Bible, and

which is utterly without sanction in the records of Christian antiquity. Thus, it may be said, she stands alone, as a necessary consequence of her position; she is the one middle point of truth between contending errors. This is no small pretension, representing, as it does, the Church of England in the character of the single confessor for the truth in the face of all the Churches of Christendom, alone “faithful found among the faithless.” Surely, a Church, venturing on so bold a position as this, ought, one would think, to bear some very marked tokens of her calling to an office, which, as all must admit, it requires little short of inspiration to fulfil: and as, while error is diverse, truth can be but one, the especial mark for which we should naturally look in this sole champion of the truth, would be unity in herself. But what is the condition in this respect of the Church of England? Is it not confessed on all hands, and bewailed the most loudly by the most devoted of her children, that, on some of the most fundamental questions of the Christian religion, there exist in her “notorious doctrinal oppositions, not mere differences, not shades of opinion, not open questions, but downright, flat, patent contradictions;”^{*} that she allows “one set of men to preach one doctrine, and another to preach its logical and consequential contradictory.” This contradiction is so palpable, that the most uneducated have been heard to express their surprise, when a change of teachers has not brought with it a change of doctrine:

^{*} English Churchman, March 26, 1846.

and I suppose you could hardly find ten consecutive parishes in any part of the country, or name a single large town, where the same doctrines are taught from every pulpit. It is even necessary, as it would appear from recent circumstances, to furnish a bishop* with a theological chart of the parish in which he is to preach, that he may know where to speak, and where to be silent ; in order to bribe him into silence in one Church on all “controverted subjects,” he is reminded that in another, a few hundred yards distant, but in the same parish, he will have full scope for preaching what he likes—that is, what he considers to be exclusively the true and pure Gospel. Look at the rival streams of theological literature daily pouring from the press : pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers, tracts against tracts, sermons against sermons. Look at the rival societies formed for the purpose of disseminating doctrines so entirely contradictory, that the one party denounces as a “soul-destroying heresy,” what the other proclaims to be “the very commencement and basis of the Christian life ;” the one puts forth, as “the sum and substance of the Gospel,” what the other does not hesitate to characterize as an “awful delusion,” and a “snare of the devil.” The fact of this absence of unity in the English Church is so glaring and unquestionable, that it is not necessary, in order to establish it, to look into the details of her disunion : at the same time, it is a fact of such importance, that it ought not to be glossed over, as it usually is, by a sort of general

* The Bishop of Calcutta at Clifton, E. C. March 1846.

formula, “acknowledging and deploring the existence of differences,” without an attempt to realize the extent of those differences and their fundamental character. It is true that many would represent them (with a recent evangelical writer) as one doctrinal disagreement, “which others endeavour to magnify into formidable proportions.”* But what is that one doctrinal disagreement, and what does it involve? Is it not concerning the cardinal doctrine, so to speak, of the Christian system, the nature and mode of man’s justification? Surely, then, the question at issue between the two contending parties in the English Church is, (as indeed the writer above alluded to acknowledges in another place,) nothing less than this, what the true Gospel really is;† for only consider how many subjects of Christian doctrine stand, more or less immediately, in necessary connexion with the doctrine of justification—original sin, the freedom of the human will, divine grace, faith, repentance, good works, sanctification, assurance of salvation, purification after death; all these must needs be understood in senses wholly different, nay, some of them received or rejected altogether, according to the different views on this point. Further, only to mention at present one portion of this great subject, the *mode* of justification, it has been well said, that the whole tone of a man’s religious character depends on his belief concerning the sacraments, and it is manifest that it must be so through every stage of his life. What

* Mr. Close’s answer to Mr. Gresley, p. 14.

† Ibid p. 33.

can be more opposite, for instance, than the condition of childhood, with and without the belief in baptismal regeneration? In the one case, the child is taught to consider himself as cleansed from his original sin, as in the favour of God, and in possession of his justifying grace, which gives him power to do his duty acceptably, and which he, on his part, is bound, by doing his duty, and by using every appointed means, to cherish and to guard. In the other, he is taught to consider himself as still a child of sin, under the wrath of God, and to look upon justification as a blessing which may or may not one day be his, while, at the same time, he is told, that “good works done before the grace of Christ are not pleasant to God,”* nor even make him “meet to receive grace;” so that one does not see what spring of energy there can be within him, nor even what motive for exertion is suggested to his mind. It is not needful to pursue the comparison, for it is obvious that the effects of the belief or denial of the sacramental principle pervade the whole life no less than childhood. What different feelings one would naturally expect, for instance, from the man who considers himself to be merely eating bread and drinking wine in the holy communion, and from him who believes that, as often as he receives that sacrament, he really receives his God.

Such, then, is the subject on which the Church of England is divided into two parties, as we have said, absolutely antagonist; and, if she differs upon this,

* Article xiii.

on what practical point affecting the Christian life of her children can she be said to speak unanimously and distinctly?

LETTER III.

I REJOICE in your candid acknowledgment of the fact of disunion in the English Church, and of its extent, that it is “a rent to the very foundation;” though, at the same time, you plead that such disunion is not inherent in her essence, but only an accident, which proper Ecclesiastical discipline would remove. Be this as it may; that you confess the fact is enough for my present purpose; for I am only concerned to prove that, from whatever cause, the Church of England has not that essential note of the true Church, Unity; and this you have fully admitted. And, before I examine the plea you have put forward, let me just entreat you to weigh well the extent of this admission. What is it to confess that a Church has not unity of doctrine, but to confess by implication that she has not the true faith, or at least that she has it not for the practical benefit of her children? For, supposing that one of the antagonist systems within her be the truth, and, even further, that her formularies sanction that system rather than the other, still, how are the simple and

uneducated to know which it is, if they hear both alike taught by her accredited ministers? It is vain to refer such to the Prayer-book, telling them to judge for themselves, whose teaching is most in accordance with what they find there; this is to require from them what they have not mental training sufficient to enable them to do, while it encourages them also to place themselves in an attitude of mind, surely most undesirable, that of judges over their teachers. To the multitude, the teaching of the Church is, and always must be, the teaching of the individual clergy; if then these are divided, how are the people to learn the truth?

Only meditate upon this, which you cannot but admit, and then determine whether, considering that the teaching of the faith is one main office of the Church, a body which does not teach any distinct creed, can be of the true Church.

But,—to turn to the examination of your plea,—do you honestly believe that unity would be the result of improved ecclesiastical discipline in the English Church? Are you not too painfully conscious, that the administrators of that ecclesiastical discipline are not themselves of the same mind; and that what has been triumphantly said by a writer already quoted* is most true, that to whatever point Anglicans “direct their artillery, they find it protected by the Episcopate; the small arms of the Evangelicals are covered by the heavy métal of many Bishops?” We did not need the recent scandal of Bishops or

* Mr. Close, p. 20.

Chancellors attacking one another in public charges, to assure us of this fact: have you not yourself often confessed that it is hopeless to attempt any reformation in the so-called Church Societies, as long as certain Bishops, whom you have named, have any influence in their councils? and is it not notorious that young men of one school of opinions crowd to the North for Holy Orders, whilst those of the opposite party, if they hope to be admitted to the same privileges, find themselves obliged to move towards the West? Surely, while the Rulers of the Church themselves are thus disagreed, an augmentation of their power, (which I suppose is involved in your idea of improved discipline,) would only tend to aggravate the evil. For, what would it be but simply a hardship, if the bishops were enabled by such augmented power to silence their dissentient clergy, unless, at the same time, their own opinions could be brought into harmony? Again, it is surely idle to seek for unity by strengthening the executive authority of the Church, until there are some means of ascertaining what her mind really is. Is there, at present, any one legitimate exponent of her doctrine recognized as such by all parties? If we quote the charges of the bishops as samples of her teaching, we are told that all these together will not make up the voice of the Church:—the decisions of an Oxford Convocation reckon for nothing:—the highest judge in an Ecclesiastical Court, gives now a judgment seeming to tend in the Catholic direction, now another swaying back into Protestantism; and, in both instances, parties are found,—in the one case a Bishop, in the

other a Regius Professor,—to deprecate such decision being in any way attributed to the Church. Nay, if the Queen, the Supreme Governor of the Church herself, in concurrence with the Primate of all England, holds out the right hand of fellowship to heretical and schismatical bodies in the East, sending a Bishop to Jerusalem, who fraternizes with Lutherans or Nestorians,—even this, we are told, is in no sense the act of the Church of England. Surely the fact, that so great changes must take place in the system of the English Church, before increase of discipline would give her unity, is an argument against your plea, that her disunion is a mere accident; for that which it would require a remodelling of her whole constitution to rectify, must be something, at least, very intimately interwoven with her essence; and, indeed, the annals of the last three hundred years, that is, of the whole term of her separate existence, are enough to show, that, if division be not inherent in her system, it is an “accident” altogether “inseparable” from it.

But, in truth, that the real cause of the mischief lies deep in her very essence, is too manifest, whether we study the history of her origin, and the formation of her various symbols and offices, or her theory as stated in her own articles. There has been within her, from the very first, a contest between two irreconcilable principles, the Catholic and the Protestant; each of these has wrung from her what sanction it could; and utter inconsistency has been, of course, the result. Hence, she presents for the acceptance of her children, (as it has been well said,) Calvinist Articles

side-by-side with a Catholic Liturgy; and, of the two parties who have always been struggling to obtain the exclusive mastery within her, one has uniformly taken the Liturgy, the other the Articles, as the key-note, in their respective attempts to harmonize the conflicting portions of her formularies. That portions of her formularies are conflicting, each being taken in its obvious sense, none, I believe, attempt to deny; and many, who desire nothing more than to submit in unquestioning obedience to the teaching of their Church, feel the inconsistency very painfully. For instance, the Catechism teaches that "the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." These words are plain and not Anti-Catholic; but how can they be reconciled with the declaration at the end of the Communion Service, which, apologizing for the practice of kneeling at that Sacrament, says that thereby no adoration is intended, for that "the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here," (in the consecrated elements?) I have myself known young persons, who have been taught to understand the Catechism in its obvious meaning, greatly perplexed by this declaration, not knowing which of the two to receive, but feeling it quite impossible to receive both. Again, the 21st Article teaches distinctly enough, that "General Councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God;" and yet, by the laws of the English Church, not only is that to be adjudged for heresy, which "hath been so adjudged by the authority of the

Canonical Scriptures," but also, "by the first four general councils." Again, in the preface to the Ordination Services, we are told that "from the Apostles' times there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church:" but, "in the Articles, the definition of a Church seems to have been purposely framed so generally as to include all the Reformed Churches"* of the continent, without any reference to an apostolical succession of bishops, or to the existence of these three orders as essential. The same may be said of the ambiguous language of the 23rd Article, and the apologetic tone of the 36th, on the same subject. So nothing can exceed the definiteness of the doctrine contained in the Baptismal Offices, and in the Catechism on the subject of Baptism, yet those who deny that doctrine, appeal, not without plausibility, to the 27th Article, which, speaking of that Sacrament only "as a sign of Regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive it *rightly* are grafted into the Church," may seem to agree with the Evangelical party, who assign its efficacy rather to the "Virtue of Prayer unto God," by which it is accompanied, than to its own sacramental power. And, if we turn from the authorized formularies of the Church of England to the writings of her standard divines, our perplexity is increased; it is true there are catenas of "Anglo-Catholic" Doctors, carefully drawn up, and exhibiting a tolerably con-

* Mr. Bickersteth's sermon before the Prayer Book and Homily Society, May 5, 1842. p. 15.

sistent view of Christian Doctrine, in an unbroken series from the Reformation to the present day ; but there are equally perfect catenas, beginning in some instances even with the very same names, and, at any rate, dating from the same era, of quite a contradictory character ; and who is to decide which is the truest representative of the mind of the Anglican Church ? for there is nothing to give a stamp of weight and authority to the one, which is wanting to the other. This is a very important consideration, and too notorious to be called in question : indeed, it is acknowledged by yourselves. “ It would be easy,” say the Editors of a series of “ Tracts of the Anglican Fathers,”* “ for disputants of all varieties of opinion within the pale of the Establishment, to find ancestors in heterodoxy.” “ Many heresies have been maintained, and many dangerous positions asserted, by divines of the Anglican communion.” “ Among the vast masses of the old divinity, almost every shade of error will find its advocate, and the natural effect upon the minds of those who examine but superficially, will be a despair of tracing any thing like unity in our Church writers.”

Such, then, is the fact. The Church of England has been, from the very beginning of her existence, disunited, as she is at present : and it seems to me, that if you look into her own statement of her position and claims, you will be compelled to acknowledge, that nothing but such incongruity in practice could result from a theory so contradictory and self-

* Vol. 1. Introduction.

destroying. Look, for instance, at her assertion, that “the Church has authority in controversies of faith;” and then at the limitation, which immediately after neutralizes this assertion: “And yet, it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.” And again, “the Church, besides Scripture, ought not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation.” Now, as it seems to me, the assertion of “authority in controversies of faith,” and these subsequent limitations taken together, must at last resolve themselves into this dilemma: If the assertion means any thing, the limitations mean nothing; if, on the other hand, the limitations have a meaning, then the assertion has none. To explain myself: the declaration that the Church may not “ordain any thing contrary to” Scripture, nor expound Scripture so as to make it repugnant to itself, necessarily supposes the existence of some party wherein resides the power of determining whether, or not, she does the things thus prohibited; or, in other words, of being her judge. If this be so, it is manifestly the said party, and not the Church herself, which has really “authority in controversies of faith.” And, who is this supreme judge? It cannot be Scripture itself, as some say, for Scripture is the *lex scripta* to be expounded; neither can it be Catholic Antiquity, as others pretend, for that is also a mere *lex scripta*:—in fact, this tribunal of last resort, at whose bar the Church is tried, can be none other than the private

judgment of each individual. This is, as we know, the recognized Protestant principle, and perfectly intelligible ; but then, what becomes of the Church's authority ? According to this theory, her children receive her teaching, not because it is hers, but because it accords with their view of what is taught in Scripture ; if it did not seem to them so to accord, they would be bound to reject it, and she has no right to blame them for so doing ; for if they plead, as many do plead, that they consider her teaching, on this or that point, to be contrary to Scripture, or even " besides " it, she has, according to the hypothesis, nothing to reply ; for her children are her legitimate judges, and from them is no appeal. If it be said, that the Church herself is the sole judge in her own cause, then the limitations we have quoted seem to me to be without meaning : for no Church, however corrupt, would confess of herself that her decisions were contrary to God's written word. In fine, if assertion and limitation are both to stand, I do not see how they can be construed into any thing but this ; that the Church rests her claim to authority on her right interpretation of the Word, and then puts forward her authority as the guarantee that her interpretation is right. But, further, is not the very fundamental principle of the Church of England's position itself a suicidal one ? Her existence, as a separate body, can only be vindicated by the assertion, that the churches from which she has separated herself have corrupted the truth ; and thus she distinctly declares, in one of her articles, that the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome have

erred, and that “not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.” Now this, of course, establishes the principle that national churches may err in matters of faith; and therefore the question may well suggest itself to an English churchman, “If a national Church may err, how can I be confident that my own Church, standing as it does alone, protesting against all the other Churches of Christendom, has a special immunity from thus erring?” and, surely, if there be no such special immunity, it would seem more probable, (on a *prima facie* view,) that the one Church of England should be in error, than the several Churches of Italy, Spain, Austria, France, and others, united as they are in one faith and one communion.

I am fully convinced then, and would fain convince you, that the disunion you bewail in the Church of England, is inherent in her very essence, as it has been her distinguishing mark from the beginning. You know that she has never presented a consistent front, except in her opposition to the doctrines of the Church of Rome; and even this negative unity, this agreement in disagreement, she is now fast losing. It has been with her as with the Donatists of old; “*Sicut Christum dividere conata est, sic ipsa à suis quotidianâ concisione dividitur.*”*

* S. Aug. de Agone Christiano, § 31. Tom. vi. p. 437. Ed. Paris.

LETTER IV.

HAVING entered thus fully into the state of the English Church with respect to Unity, it is fair to apply the same test to the Roman Church; but much need not be said to prove that she can bear the trial, for the fact of her unity is admitted, as far as I know, by most Protestant divines, though they often endeavour to trace its existence to some unworthy cause. Thus, "The boasted unity of the Church of Rome is the result of the negation and abandonment of private judgment; it is the effect of that implicit belief, which brings the mind into bondage to the decisions of fallible men. In one word, it is not union founded in truth but in error."* And again: "It is a union merely artificial and mechanical; a unity resulting in innumerable instances from accident, custom, and authority." "The system of Roman Catholic unity," says Blanco White,† "is but an arbitrary contrivance;" "the effect of blind submission to a silencing authority;" and I could quote passages to the same effect almost without number. Another, and not an unimportant class of writers, conscious of the difficulty, seek to escape it by dis-

* Errors of the Church of Rome, by Rev. R. Meek, 1834. p. 7.
See also Mr. Gresley's "Theory of Development," &c. p. 11.

† Evidence against Catholicism, pp. 109, 111.

paraging and making light of Christian unity altogether. Thus Leslie denies that there is any stricter unity in the Church than in the world ; and maintains that, as there is an “ unity of relation, of humanity, and of common principles,” which all the nations upon earth still retain, even amid the fury of war, so the unity of the Church consists in that common Christianity wherein all agree, a unity which can never be lost.* Others, again, bid us look for the unity of Protestants in the depths of their spiritual life ; thus wisely carrying the question into a region beyond the cognizance of human faculties. Barrow too propounds a theory on the subject of unity, and enumerates the several duties which flow from it ; (the non-fulfilment of which, however, by his own communion, proves her, according to his theory, to be no part of the Church Universal,) and then proceeds to inquire,† whether that stricter unity, which the Church of Rome insists upon, is necessary by the design and appointment of God: of course he decides in the negative ; but the inquiry itself is sufficient to show that the unity of the churches in the Roman obedience is at least something stricter and more real than is even professed elsewhere. But, if we look at the one point only of unity in faith, where, I would ask, will you find in the Roman Church anything at all like those differences of opinion which I have pointed out in the Church of England? You know well that they do not exist: that the Catholic priest-

* Works, vol. 3. p. 12, 13. Ed. Oxford, 1832.

† Unity of the Church, sect. 8. vol. 3. p. 212. Edinburgh, 1841.

hood, from Great Britain to New Zealand,—now, as when Protestantism sprang into being,—at all times and in all places, speak, as with one voice, one and the same unalterable faith. You will not find some Catholic congregations believing in the real Presence, and others rejecting it: some priests commending prayers for the dead, and others protesting against them: some persons practising confession, and others denying the absolving power of the priest. Variations of practice you may indeed discover in different Catholic countries, but no diversity of faith. Seasons, degrees, and rules of fasting, for instance, may differ according to climates or physical capabilities, but you will find no Catholics denying the obligation to fast in some way or other. There may be more public demonstrations of love and honour to the saints and the Blessed Virgin in Spain, for instance, than in France; but the doctrine of the communion of saints is precisely the same, and expounded in the same terms, throughout the Catholic world. In a word, the same faith is believed and professed everywhere, though its outward expression may and must differ, according to the taste, habits, earnestness, moral and intellectual capabilities, that is, the whole character of those who receive it.

But it is scarcely needful to say all this: for, to establish the fact of unity in the Roman Church, it is really enough to appeal to the common opinion of her enemies concerning her. Is she not universally dreaded as a subtle and dangerous conspiracy: and what conspiracy could be more than contemptible without unity? Is not her polity everywhere spoken

of as the “masterpiece of human wisdom ;” and could it be such, if its fruit were division? You yourself, and others of my friends, bear unconscious testimony to the same truth, by your complaints that you can no longer look upon my words and deeds as my own; because, in the case of all Roman Catholics, you find it quite impossible to distinguish between the working of the individual will, and that of the system. Many go further still, and believe that a man’s moral being undergoes a complete transformation when he becomes a Catholic: that the virtues which have been wrought into his character by previous good habits—habits, it may be, which have been years in forming; nay, even those instinctive perceptions of right and wrong, common to him with the whole human race—are blotted out in a moment, all his personal responsibilities being merged in the one absorbing duty of obedience; and that too, as it is believed, to a power which contradicts his natural conscience, calling evil good and good evil; but which, nevertheless, by some mysterious attraction, sucks him into itself, “stripping him of his personality,” and making him a blind organ of its will. The falsehood and absurdity of this belief you are as well aware of as myself; but real and intense indeed, and manifest to the world, must be the unity of that body of which such things can be believed, in which the individuality of many millions is supposed to be thus merged and annihilated.

There are only two pleas, which I can at all anticipate, as likely to be urged in reply to this statement: first, that, however it may be now, unity of faith has

not always been a characteristic of the Church of Rome ; that, in former days, there were disputes and divisions upon Christian doctrine between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, fierce struggles between various religious orders, &c. And secondly, that even now, she tolerates differences on matters of faith, as between the Gallicans and Ultra-montanes. In answer to the first of these objections, I would say, it is undoubtedly true that there was considerable disagreement on Christian doctrine between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, just as there was between the different parties in the Homoöusian disputes of the fourth century, or in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies of the fifth. And as long as these dissensions lasted, so long the unity of faith was to a certain degree impaired, or, to speak more accurately, was, for a while, obscured ; but, by-and-bye, in all these instances alike, the Church uttered her voice, and the false doctrine gradually withered and died, or, if it still lived, it was no longer within her pale. That disputes, such as those alluded to, were to be expected beforehand, as likely to occur in the Church, nay, as from the nature of the case, almost inevitable, I think a moment's consideration will dispose you freely to admit. The Gospel, it is true, is a divine message, yet, as the language in which it is conveyed is human, questions may naturally suggest themselves, almost without end, as to the real import of that language : as, for instance, from the brief and mysterious announcement, " The Word became Flesh," three " wide questions," as it has been well said,* at once

* Essay on Development, p. 97.

open upon us: what is meant by “the Word,” what by “Flesh,” and what by “became:” and inquiries of this kind have, as you know, from time to time arisen within the Church, in the shape of conjectures or hypotheses, more or less supported by scriptural and traditional evidence. These have gradually gained ground and attracted notice, until the Church has felt herself obliged to pronounce judgment upon them, and thenceforward, according to her seal of sanction or anathema, such opinions have been either incorporated into the Catholic creed, or denounced as contrary to it: and those bodies, which, spite of such anathema, have still clung to the proscribed opinions, have gradually become external and hostile to the Church. There may have been a longer or a shorter struggle, but at last the victory of the Church has been manifest and complete; the enemies once detected and expelled, never again rise up to trouble her; they are “gone out from her” for ever; and the increased distinctness of her creed, which is the result of the conflict, prevents their ever finding a home in her again.

Such has been the ordinary law of progress and decay in all heresies; and future ecclesiastical historians will doubtless have to give the same account of Jansenism. Jansenius sought to revive a heresy which had been already anathematized; and though he brought it forward wrapt in a subtle disguise, yet the divine instinct of the Church detected, and once more condemned it. Since that time, none have dared publicly to enunciate any of the propositions which were thus rejected; or when at any time such

an attempt has been made, it has at once been visited by the same censures; and even if traces of the spirit in which these errors originated, or which they called into being, may perhaps at times have been found lurking in quarters, where, nevertheless, there was no outward disobedience to the Church, still this would be no more than one would naturally expect to follow upon the public agitation and decision of any doctrinal question whatever—no more, in fact, than we know from history did follow after the condemnation of the Arian heresy; just as when the sudden fall of some fragment of rock has troubled the course of a mountain stream, though the obstacle may be presently and effectually removed, yet some time must elapse before the turbid waters are restored to purity. However, if I may judge from my own experience, I can safely aver that nothing is ever brought before the ordinary Catholic in the course of his religious training, which is not blessedly distinct in doctrine, and stamped with the undoubted seal of the Church's authority. Can you then, in honesty, bring forward a dispute, which has thus died away without leaving a single practical hindrance in the path of Catholic believers, as in any way parallel to the divisions in the English Church? These are as rife now as they were at the beginning, and on the very same points. Although the two systems of doctrine struggling within her are absolutely antagonist, and therefore, if she have a distinct creed, one of them must needs be hostile to it; yet no authoritative voice has denounced either as heresy: and if, as you contend, the puritan system is the alien, it is so far

from being subdued, that, (spite of the experience of the 17th century, and the recent movement in the Catholic direction,) we are told by persons well qualified to give an opinion, that, even at this moment, there is nothing to prevent puritanism again getting the upper hand, and remodelling the Church of England.* Can it be said, in the same way, of Jan- senism, Lutheranism, or any other heresy that has been once condemned, that there is danger of its overrunning the Church of Rome? Surely not.

It is still less to your purpose to refer to the differences which exist between Gallicans and Ultra-Montanes, as disturbing the unity of the faith, because these, as you well know, are not concerning matters of faith at all; they are mere speculative differences as to the limits of the pope's prerogative, which have never yet been defined. This, indeed, is admitted by Protestant controversialists, for it is a common topic of ridicule with them, that so grave a point as the supremacy should be left indeterminate in any of its details. The article of faith, "that the Roman Church is the mother and mistress of all Churches," both parties alike hold; both promise and practise true obedience to the bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ; and this is all which the Church requires from them in this matter. Hence these speculative disagreements occasion no practical inconvenience. Whether the pope be personally

* Mr. Gresley's "Real Danger of the Church of England," pp. 29. 34. &c.

infallible or not, may be discussed, and different opinions may be entertained about it; yet, since all agree that he is to be obeyed, and that any one systematically disobeying him ceases *ipso facto* to be a Catholic, the living power which emanates from his central authority is as energetic and effectual, in fact, as if there were no theoretical differences concerning it. So, again, it may be disputed whether the authority of the pope be superior to that of general councils, but there has never been any occasion for determining this point, because they have never been at variance; or, once more, that the pope has *jure divino* temporal sovereignty over Christian kingdoms is, at least in the present state of the world, a mere theoretical question, of no practical moment whatever. These, I believe, are the main points of difference between the two theological schools of which we are speaking; and they are obviously of such a nature that, though they may occupy the divine in his study, or the professor in his lecture-room, yet they could not be made the subject of popular discussion in the pulpit. And I must say further, that though I have had more or less familiar conversation with fifty or sixty Catholic clergy, yet these subjects have never, in my presence, been made topics of controversy. You know whether it would be possible to associate for six months with the same number of your clergy, and to have any doubt on one's mind as to the existence of differences among them.

As to the disputes of regulars with seculars, or of the various religious orders one with another, so far

as they affected Christian doctrine at all, it was entirely upon open questions. Even the well-known difference between the Jesuits and Dominicans, respecting the *method* of the operation of divine grace in the human soul, turned upon points totally beside the defined doctrine on that subject, and was not one which could in the slightest degree affect the practical belief of the faithful ; it furnishes, therefore, no parallel to the divisions in the Church of England, which are confessedly upon fundamental articles of the faith.

It is manifest, then, from the mere sensible testimony of facts, that in this essential characteristic of the true Church, Unity, the Roman communion stands out in distinct and unquestionable superiority ; and that superiority will appear more striking and important, if we briefly examine into the inward principles or causes from which it springs. All Catholic doctrine, as held by the Roman Church, has been the result of one continued law of growth, and has therefore the unity of nature and of life : its development has been like that of the Church itself, “ the least of all seeds, but, when it is grown, the greatest among herbs,” or like the growth of grace in each individual soul, “ first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Thus, the seed of all Catholic theology may be said to be the one great truth of the Incarnation ; “ the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ;” “ perfect God and perfect Man, yet not two, but one Christ ;” this is the centre round which every detail in the whole cycle of Catholic doctrine moves in harmonious sympathy ; this is

the one fundamental idea, on which is based the edifice of faith—or rather the vivifying principle which, by animating every individual part, binds all together into one living whole. That the essential doctrines of the mediation and the atonement flow immediately from it, is obvious to all, even from the letter of Holy Scripture itself; and deeper reflection will show us that it has a no less real and necessary connection with the nature and efficacy of the sacraments, with the doctrine of a visible and infallible Church, with the intercession and invocation of saints, with the especial prerogative of the blessed Virgin Mother, with the veneration of relics, and every article of the Catholic faith. All these are most intimately interwoven with it, and with each other; the same *theandric* principle, as it is called by German theologians, runs through them all, and distinctly marks them as parts of one indivisible whole. And, because the more harmonious the mechanism of a system, the less will it bear rough handling, therefore, those who once presume to subject this divinely-constituted creed to a critical examination, choosing this portion and rejecting that, soon find that they have loosened the whole fabric of belief in their mind, and that, if they will be consistent, and not rest in broken theories, they must go on to the denial of Revelation itself. The biography of Blanco White is a melancholy instance of the truth of this remark; so are the lives of many other apostates, all demonstrating, by the sure testimony of experience, that there is no trustworthy resting-place to a logical mind between obedience to the Catholic faith on the one side, and infidelity

on the other. Testimony to the same truth has been borne by the experience (only in a contrary direction) of many recent converts; they first received the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and then were gradually led to feel its incompleteness without the sacrament of penance, and to see the "logical necessity" of belief in purgatory; they were taught to acknowledge the real presence, and soon felt that adoration of the Host was involved in that acknowledgement; and so on, through many close and subtle links, until at length they embraced, in theory at least, the larger portion, if not the whole, of the Catholic creed, before they recognized the authority of the Catholic Church; and this because, throughout the whole length and breadth of the Catholic system, there is the strictest logical coherency of each and every part. Nay, the history of the English Church bears testimony to the same truth; when she separated from the Universal Church, though she deliberately rejected much of its doctrine, yet she meant to assign certain limits to the working of the spirit of scepticism which she had thus evoked: but what has been the result? She wished to cast off what she called Romish superstition; her children have also "cast off that reverence and obedience which the law of God requires.* She purposed to discontinue the Catholic practice of invocation of saints and angels; her children have "lost all practical feeling of the communion of saints, and, like the Sadducees of old, have learnt almost to forget or deny the existence of

* Mr. Gresley's "Theory of Development," &c. p. 15, 16.

angels or spirits." She dreaded "too great an exaltation of the Sacraments;" her children "deny or explain away the doctrine of baptismal regeneration." She objected to the "abuses of the mass;" her children have been led to "degrade the holy sacrament into a mere sign of a thing absent." She rejected the supremacy of the pope; her children have been led into a practical disregard of episcopal authority: and so on, in the same way, through every detail of Christian faith and practice. Nay, the very doctrine of the incarnation itself has become the subject of unhallowed disputations or secret disbelief: "Arianism was taught with impunity in our communion in the last century," is the confession of an English clergyman;* and a late Regius Professor of Divinity in the university of Oxford publicly professed his belief that two-thirds of the clergy were (unconscious) Nestorians. Now, as we have before said, to this logical coherency of the Roman system of doctrine, that of the Church of England forms a melancholy contrast: so far from the holding one of her doctrines making it necessary to hold all, some of them are so incongruous that belief in one absolutely precludes belief in another; for instance, if a man heartily receives the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he cannot in earnest believe in baptismal regeneration, nor the real presence in the eucharist, nor, indeed, in the sacramental principle at all; which belief the Church of England nevertheless inculcates in her

* Rev. J. F. Russell. "Judgment of the Anglican Church."

liturgy as undoubtedly as, in her articles, she enforces the doctrine of justification by faith.

Another, and not less important, cause of the unity of the Roman Church is to be found in her living and energetic authority. It has been well said, that "firmness of belief can only be produced by the recognition of some outward and permanent teaching authority;" an authority which shall determine the limits within which doubt or speculation may have scope, while it keeps the sacred deposit of the faith whole and undefiled. Such an authority is the Catholic Church to her children; and she has no shrinking, no hesitation in enunciating her claim to be such. She stands forth fearlessly as the one representative of her Lord on earth, the sole living exponent of His will, and the dispenser of His gifts; indefectible, because the promise standeth sure, "I will be with you alway even to the end of the world;" infallible, because inspired by the Spirit of Truth; and bearing on her standard the awful denunciation, "He that despiseth you despiseth me." That such authority belonged to the Apostles, none, I suppose, will question; and that same authority the Church claims as her own, by virtue of her succession from them. From her, therefore, the Catholic receives the faith, even as she received it from God, not making himself its judge, not scrutinizing its details, nor submitting them to any test of his own choosing, but in full unhesitating confidence, as from an inspired teacher; "the faith" to him is not an opinion of his own mind, it is something out of himself, positive, dogmatic,

complete, and immutable; and his reception of it is not an act of eclecticism, but of faith.

That this recognition of an infallible authority must necessarily result in unity of doctrine, is obvious to all; and it is equally obvious how greatly the state of the English Church contrasts in this particular with that of the Roman. We have already remarked on the hesitating, self-contradictory way in which she asserts her authority; and how little that authority is recognized by the majority of her children, you yourself would be the first to lament; but you would not perhaps be so ready to admit, that the language used on this subject by the school to which you belong, is quite as subversive of the principle of Church authority—at least, as that principle is understood by Catholics—as any of which you complain in the *evangelical* party; not only do you speak of your bishops as “men of the world,” and a by-gone generation, whose opposition to the spirit of improvement is to be looked for as a matter of course; and of your articles as a tyranny, to be evaded until it can be thrown off; but you talk of infusing this or that spirit into the Church, of introducing into her such and such doctrines and practices, nay, of “Catholicizing” her, as if the Church were a passive thing, to be moulded at your will, instead of a living power, instinct with the spirit of wisdom—as if her children were the channels of God’s truth to her, not she to them.

But enough has been said on the subject of unity: I will only remind you, in conclusion, that the Church in which, as we have seen, it has no place,

consists of a single nation; while that Church, of which it is the striking characteristic, is composed of many nations, peoples, and languages, diverse in all beside—some of them in this world's interests hostile to each other—but all one in her; “out of many nations one people,” submitting to one discipline, governed by one head, holding the one faith, in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace.

LETTER V.

HAVING said thus much on the subject of unity, we next come to the consideration of sanctity, as the second test of the true Church; and this I feel to be a harder task, both because it is a point on which comparison is more invidious, and because the test itself, from its very nature, is more difficult of application: and yet I cannot consent to pass it by unnoticed, because the testimony borne in favour of the Church Catholic, by the lives of her Saints, appears to me at once the most winning and the most convincing that can be adduced: and it is, moreover, to this note of His Church more especially, that our Lord Himself seems to direct our attention:—“By their fruits ye shall know them.”

In claiming this note of sanctity, however, as the exclusive possession of the Roman Church, I do not,

of course, mean that there is nothing which might be called by that name to be found in the Church of England: sanctity, unlike unity, admits of degrees, and I should suppose that there is no body of Christians, I had almost said, no body of worshippers of any religion whatsoever, among whom does not exist something which, at least, seems akin to it. But what I do mean is this, that there is in the Roman Church a living energy, bursting forth from time to time in words of power and wonderful deeds; manifesting itself now in this man, now in that, by the heroic exercise of supernatural virtues; now darting upwards to the very throne of God, now spending itself in some enterprise for the good of man; embodying itself in all varieties of outward form, as ages roll along and circumstances change, but always essentially the same, always living, plastic, and creative: and this is what we mean when we speak of *Sanctity*.

Now I appeal to yourself to judge, whether a spirit such as this has ever found a permanent home in the Church of England, or whether her very excellencies have not borne altogether a different character, a character cold and common-place in comparison, and, if I may venture to say it, "of the earth, earthy." But since this must seem to you an invidious saying, I had rather borrow the language of one of your own brethren, which, in the main, expresses what I mean. "Ours is the Church of Walton and Herbert, not of Athanasius and Ambrose; and truly we have been born into a beautiful inheritance. Our fathers have bequeathed to us the appreciation of a kindly

and a holy spirit; a spirit of affectionate unobtrusive meekness, of considerate friendliness, of calm cheerfulness; and these are in their measure not only appreciated but realized amongst us..... But not content with thankfulness, we have been boastful of this grace of ours; we have spoken of it as if it were the only form of Christian love, as if no man could have any other line of action than to be frank and amiable, to marry and bring up a family, to be neighbourly to his equals, and active in relieving want, &c.....whereas there are a whole class of expressions in the New Testament, which, though surely they do not condemn the English Church, yet seem somehow not to have received their natural development in it.....We seem afraid of these. We are anxious judiciously to point out that in these days, when Christianity is rich, men of large possessions are not called on to sell all they have; when it is established, to leave fathers and wives; that when Christianity is protected from injury, there is no expediency in remaining single; when it is triumphant, no reason why we should not laugh now..... Within our own Church, we are careful to soothe enthusiasm, and somewhat helpless in directing it.”*

This account of the English Church is confirmed by the fact, that, whenever a spirit more akin to that of the Roman Saints has for a moment shot forth within her, it has been gazed at or shrunk from, as a portent strange and full of danger: and it has either

* British Critic, January 1838. See also Macaulay's Essays, vol. 3. p. 237.

died out at once for want of aliment, or has burnt its way through her enclosures, devastating as it went, and has spent itself at last among the thorns in the wilderness. Look at the history of the many secessions from her bosom; how often have they been originated by some ardent mind, full of zeal for God, which, if it had found in her a mother's sympathy and a mother's gentle discipline, would have learnt to temper all that was extravagant, and to condense enthusiastic feeling into devoted service; but which, finding instead of such sympathy and guidance, nothing but cold rebuke and utter uncongeniality, has burst forth, breaking all bonds, and so its energies have run to waste, working for the most part evil rather than good. Even at the present day, does it not grieve one to the heart, to see the immense religious power, so to speak, awake and energizing in this country, and yet accomplishing nothing, and worse than nothing; like giant strength, without eyesight to direct it? Remember the early struggles of Wesley; or, confining your view to the present time, consider how many of the fanatical sects daily springing up in this land have really been engendered by a sense of spiritual misery, and a longing for something more real and intense—for something of inward devotedness and outward service, more worthy of the Christian calling. And this is especially true of the poor; if they are awakened to any acute sense of the realities of eternity, where do they fly for sympathy and succour? Not to the Church of England; but almost invariably to some religious association out of her pale, where they find more to satisfy their

cravings. You can hardly deny that the spiritual life which exists among our poor has been kept alive mainly by the exertions of the dissenters, especially the Methodists, and that among these last, if anywhere in Protestantism, we must seek for a spirit of zeal and self-devotion, akin to that of the Catholic saints. Akin to it, I say, inasmuch as it is a zeal for God : but yet how different in its character ! zeal, in the Catholic Church, though cherished with the tenderest sympathy, and nursed up to its fullest development, yet in its outward working is subject to strict rule, and exercised in a continual discipline, not only of austerity and self-restraint, but also of humility and obedience ; the Church claims as entire submission from her most gifted as from her meanest children ; and how beautiful a character of steadiness and refinement is thus wrought into the minds of the ardent and influential you need only read the lives of her saints to discover. You know how seldom the two qualities of really burning zeal and humble obedience are found together in the Church of England ; and even when they do exist thus blended, still in some way or other we cannot but feel that something is still lacking of the splendour and completeness of Catholic sanctity. It seems presumptuous to speak in a tone of anything like criticism of such a one, for instance, as Henry Martyn ; but the more sensible one is of the wonderful beauty of his character, the more certain one feels that if in anything he fell short of the Christian type, the fault must have been in the system to which he belonged. Now, has any one read his most touching history without a sense of

pain? He left all for Christ's sake ; he took up the cross in earnestness and devotedness of purpose, if ever man did, leaving father, mother, and country, and ties dearer still, to preach what he believed to be the Gospel : but did he find that cross, as Catholic saints have ever found it even in this life, its own exceeding rich reward? He never winced under its burden, but he evidently felt it as a burden, even to the last : how few traces are to be found in his exquisite diary, except here and there in momentary gleams, of that triumphant joy which was with the saints in the desert, and the martyrs at the stake, and which glories in tribulation, receiving seven-fold more for all that it relinquishes ! None ever made a more entire surrender of all he loved on earth than Henry Martyn, but yet the sadness with which he felt the lack, (though it only makes his character the more endearing to our human sympathies,) is a striking contrast to the fulness and entire satisfaction of all the cravings of the heart which the Catholic saints find in the living presence of their Lord. We cannot even imagine any of them living, as he seems to have lived, in a state of habitual melancholy, pining in solitude, and almost broken-hearted from a disappointed attachment. What his lack was no Catholic could be at a loss to discover ; he had moral and religious capabilities of the very highest order, but he had not that " Bread of Life," which is at once strength and sweetness, and love and joy incomprehensible. Truly there are many of earnest mind in the Church of England, who yearn with unsatisfied longings, and yet shrink from enter-

ing that holy city of God, where is full satiety and everlasting joy. “Convertentur ad vesperam, et famem patientur ut canes: et circuibunt civitatem.”*

The fact that there is a real difference in spirit between Rome and England is one, which, even while I was an English Churchman, I felt I could not deny: and it is freely acknowledged by many who are still in your Communion: indeed, I cannot believe that any unprejudiced person, who has really studied the religious biography of England and Rome respectively, of the last three hundred years, can have any doubt upon the subject. It is sometimes, however, objected, that the Catholic and Anglican standards of holiness being confessedly different, it is not fair to try the holy men of one communion by the standard of the other: for that, if, instead of the Catholic, we take the Anglican rule as our measure, Hooker, Andrewes, and Ken, are to be preferred to St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, or St. Vincent de Paul. In answer to this suggestion, I can only express my conviction, that, whichever of the various qualities enumerated in Holy Writ, consecrated by our Lord's example, or exhibited in primitive practice, you may select as tokens of sanctity, the Roman Church will be found to possess them both far more abundantly, and in greater splendour than the English. Whether you look to the contemplative life of Mary, or the more active service of Martha;—whether your type of Christian sanctity be the missionary zeal of the

* Ps. lviii. 15.

Apostle of the Gentiles, or the love of Christ which burned in the breast of Peter;—the purity of him who leaned on his Lord's bosom, or the penitence of her who bathed his feet with tears;—the austerity of the Holy Baptist, or the charity of the Son of Consolation;—be it which it may of all these, you must now seek its transcript elsewhere than at home. For which of her missionaries can the Church of England pretend to compare with St. Francis Xavier, or the noble fathers of Paraguay? Which of them have sealed their testimony with their blood, like the heroic preachers of the faith, who won the crown of martyrdom during the tremendous persecution of the 17th century in Japan? or those who even during the last few years have passed from fearful tortures in Cochin China, to join the white-robed army in heaven? Which of the very holiest of her children can we conceive "rapt to a Seraph," and brought into mysterious communion with the Passion, like St. Francis of Assisium? Which of her specimens of youthful piety, touching as many of them are, belongs to at all the same order of spiritual life with the angelic purity of St. Aloysius or St. Stanislas? In austerity and penitential discipline, she would not even challenge a comparison; for that is, as you know, one of the points on which she considers the Catholic temper of mind to be morbid and overstrained, striving "to wind itself too high, For sinful man beneath the sky;" and yet the saints of the first four centuries, (to which period she professes to appeal as a standard,) exceeded, if possible, in severity of penance, those of the mediæval Church.

It is, I suppose, in practical love to man, that is, in the various branches of Christian alms-giving, that you would be most disposed to claim equality with the Roman Church ; but, on this point, without pursuing the comparison between individuals, or insisting on that peculiar character, which, as I think, distinguishes the “ philanthropy ” of the Catholic Saint from that of other men, just in the same indescribable way that heroism is distinguished from ordinary valour,—it is sufficient to take a more general view, and to look at the numbers, both of men and women, whom the Catholic Church presents to us, not singly, but grouped as it were in masses, each under the shade of some holy institute, wholly consecrated by vow, and for life, to works of mercy. And here a comparison naturally suggests itself, between the Churches of Rome and England, which, I fear, will sound invidious, but which strikes my own mind so forcibly, that I cannot forbear calling your attention to it ; I mean, as to the principles which they respectively assume as the basis of their calculations in organizing any extensive plan of beneficence ; the Catholic Church, in such cases, appeals to self-devotion, the Protestant to self-interest. To explain myself : although it is fair to say, that the sums collected in England for charitable purposes, are spoken of with admiration even among Catholics, and though very many individuals voluntarily devote to charitable employments all the time they can command, yet the Protestant Church dares not reckon on absorbing, for a permanence, the *whole* time and energy of any but paid agents,—while the Catholic

Church, on the other hand, reckons on indefinite numbers, eager to spend and be spent in her service, and only waiting for her to point out to them a fitting object for their zeal. For instance: you remember the great movement made a few years ago, by some excellent individuals, in the National Education Society; one object of which was the establishment of schools for the training of parochial schoolmasters; you must often have heard it prophesied, that the scheme would fail after all, because young men educated on the scale proposed, would be able to obtain much more lucrative situations in other departments than they could as schoolmasters, and therefore it would not be “worth their while” to adhere to their original destination. How this difficulty has been met, I do not know; but its having been so generally felt is an exemplification of what I mean. When a parallel movement took place in the Roman Catholic Church, towards the end of the 17th century, to meet the need then felt of more extended machinery for Christian education, it issued in the founding of a new religious order, the “Frères des Ecoles Chrésiennes,” which at the time of the French Revolution numbered 121 houses, and continues in vigorous operation to the present day. And thus it has ever been: besides the great Orders so well known throughout Christendom, whose services to the cause of literature and science, and indeed of improvement generally, during the middle ages, are now universally recognized,—those of St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Augustine, and the most ancient and fruitful of them all, the noble order of St. Benedict, there were

almost countless associations, all formed on the same basis of self-devotion, called into being by the passing exigencies of the times; some of which, therefore, have passed away, now that their work is done, while others still remain. You cannot glance ever so superficially at the history of the mediæval Church, without finding, that as one want arose after another in that age of struggle and progressive civilization, it was thus met. For instance; when that dreadful disease, called St. Anthony's fire, first broke out in Europe in the 11th century, a nobleman of Dauphiné, whose son had been attacked by it, and, as he believed, miraculously restored to health, founded the Order of St. Anthony, for the purpose of tending those who were suffering under it. The ravages of leprosy, in like manner, called into birth the Knights of St. Lazarus: from the persecutions endured by the Christians in the East, arose the Military Orders. A noble pilgrim, returning one day from the shrine of St. James in Gallicia, fell among bandits, on the height of a desolate mountain in Auvergne; he escaped from them unhurt, and in fulfilment of a vow made in the hour of peril, instituted an association for the protection of future pilgrims; built a religious house on the spot, with a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and established there a community, consisting of knights, sworn to drive the robbers from the neighbouring forests, and to escort travellers on their way, of priests, of lay-brothers, and other servants, and of a sisterhood of religious ladies, devoted to attendance on the pilgrims, and on the sick poor. The Order of our Lady of Mercy was founded for the

redemption of captives from the infidels ; and it was one of the vows taken, and in many instances actually fulfilled by its members, that, if money should fail them for this purpose, they should sell themselves into slavery as a ransom. You know what well-deserved praise has been lately bestowed on one of your clergy, for having caused prayer to be made in his church for a poor criminal about to be executed : now, there has existed in Rome, ever since the year 1488, a brotherhood called the “ *Archi-Confraternità di S. Giovanni Decollato,*” whose duty it is, not only to pray for such persons continually both in life and death, but also to visit them in their prison, to administer to them all the consolation which their condition admits, to prepare them for death, to accompany them to execution, to give them Christian burial within their own cemetery, and to take care of their widows and orphans. Madness too, that most dreadful of all calamities, has been remembered by the charity of the Church. At the time of the Reformation, perhaps in consequence of the great excitement which then prevailed, this malady seems suddenly to have increased to a fearful degree ; and at that very time, St. John of God founded an Order especially destined for its relief, the success of which was wonderful, for the Christian love of those devoted brethren anticipated the discovery of modern science as to the efficacy of a soothing treatment. Thus, their hospitals were surrounded by extensive grounds, and care was taken to provide all possible variety of gentle recreation for the sufferers. A touching story is told of a visit paid by the Superior of the Order to

a wretched maniac, who was kept chained in one of the underground dungeons, used at that time for such purposes by the civil power, and who was said to be unapproachable. The holy brother insisted on being let into his den, and immediately embracing him, and stroking him gently with his hand, contrived to let him know that he was come in love. The poor maniac, melted in a moment at the voice of kindness, became passive as a child; allowed himself to be clothed, and, to the astonishment of all, walked away, leaning on the arm of his deliverer; and in a year that man was restored to his family in health and peace. These are only a very few specimens from an almost countless number;* but they are sufficient to illustrate what I have said, that the Roman Catholic Church may safely reckon on finding among her children self-devotion sufficient to carry out her designs of mercy. And as her pious institutions are based on a higher principle than parallel ones elsewhere, they are, in consequence, much more efficient in their operation. “Catholicity,” says a Protestant writer,† “has made more eager and systematic aggression upon the moral and physical ills of poverty,—has shown more sympathy with poverty,—has given away more, and done more for charity’s sake, in each successive year of its existence, than some wealthy Protestant establishments in each successive century of theirs: with its brotherhoods and

* *Catéchisme de Persévérance*, par l’Abbé Gaume, tom. vi. pp. 154, 164, 192, 236, 332, &c.

† *London and Westminster Review*, vol. 34.

sisterhoods of mercy, it gives a basis of permanent institution and uniform religious principle to beneficent impulses, which by Protestants are commonly left to the energy of each passing generation and the necessities of the hour, and often die out for lack of an efficient organization.” Compare, for instance, the working of your District Visiting Societies, which, as you know, are often found to be so unmanageable, that clergymen (especially of the school to which you belong) have judged it expedient to let them die away,—with the orderly, quiet and efficient co-operation afforded to the Catholic Parochial Clergy by the Sœurs de la Charité, or Sisters of Mercy. Indeed, you little know what is being wrought in our own day, and in this very country, by Catholic self-devotion. You have no idea how much has been done by a few nuns of the third order of St. Dominic in the town of Coventry;—by a religious sisterhood in Birmingham;—and by another, working in the very depths of London poverty;—nor how much more effectually the objects aimed at by your Curate’s Fund and Pastoral Aid Society, are accomplished by the Missions of Passionists, Redemptorists, and Rosminians.

But, though we have hitherto only considered the religious orders with reference to Christian almsgiving, we must not forget that some of them were instituted for purposes yet more exalted. The love of man in the Catholic Church is but an off-shoot, as it were, from the love of God: and to the more immediate exercise of this higher love, many of her holy fraternities and sisterhoods are consecrated. That

there is nothing in the English Church in any way parallel to the contemplative orders, is admitted on all hands ; and Protestants escape the difficulty by denouncing those orders as dreamy and useless, and a mere encumbrance on the system to which they belong. But, on this point, let us refer once more to those standards which the Church of England acknowledges,—Scripture and primitive practice. Surely, we shall find in both enough to teach us that there is a hidden life of prayer, and praise, and mystical communion, which, in its higher degree, is the privilege of those who, for its sake, renounce all besides. We read in the Gospel of continuing in fastings and prayers night and day ; of forsaking father and mother, wife and children, for Christ ; of bearing the cross daily ; of selling all that we have ; of being dead to the world ; crucified with Christ ; buried with Him ; and all these sayings of Holy Writ we know that the early Christians understood literally, and faithfully practised : that they continued instant in prayer night and day : that they gave up their possessions, and relinquished all their nearest ties, stripping themselves of every thing personal, that they might no longer live in themselves, but in Christ : and many of them, as we know, long before the system of monastic life was organized, fled to the deserts that they might be, without distraction, rapt in the love of God. Think of St. Macarius, St. Anthony, St. Ephrem of Syria, and the Egyptian anchorites, and then ask yourself for a moment—were those holy fathers now to revisit this world, where would they find sympathy ? Would it be in that Church which

pours forth at this day, as she has done from the beginning, her swarms of holy contemplatives, or in that which, in the course of three hundred years, has had one family (that of good Nicholas Ferrar) devoted to perpetual psalmody ; and, at this moment, has one religious house, not however contemplative, of very recent establishment, and consisting only of four or five members?

But you will say, that the destruction of these blessed institutions was no act of the Church of England, but, on the contrary, a fierce exercise of royal tyranny and oppression, of which she was the victim, and the effects of which she has no power to remedy, and that it is hard she should be upbraided with her calamity. But, my dear friend, if she were really Catholic, she could and would have remedied it long ago. The mere dissolution, in the reign of Henry VIII., of the religious communities then existing, though it involved the confiscation of their property, and the overthrow of their dwellings, could not have destroyed the monastic spirit. If those feelings and desires to which the conventual system alone supplies satisfaction, had not, from some cause, been annihilated at the same time, they would soon have re-appeared on the surface of your history, in the form of new or revived religious institutions. Consider the recent destinies of the Church in France. In 1790, the religious houses were dissolved, churches and abbeyes destroyed, whole communities slaughtered, their goods confiscated, estates sold, and the very name of the Christian faith proscribed throughout the land: now, there are no less

than 35,000 monks and nuns,* once more discharging their conventual duties as zealously, and as fully according to the spirit of their respective institutes, as at any period prior to the Revolution: there are even a larger number, we are told, of the severer Orders than there were before: it is the same in Belgium, it would be the same everywhere throughout the whole Catholic world; even in our own country, in spite of the systematic oppression under which Catholics so long laboured, the spirit of self-devotion has not been crushed out of them; several monasteries, and upwards of thirty convents, bear witness to its life.

Surely these things, if true, are very important, and ought to be well considered, in weighing the respective claims of the Roman and English Churches to the note of sanctity:—if in every form of Christian holiness the saints in the Roman communion stand pre-eminent; if there be in that Church a spirit of self-devotion lacking to the other;—if, since England broke herself off from the rest of Christendom, the “more excellent way” has been practically unheard of within her communion, while, during the same period, in the churches of the Roman obedience, hundreds and thousands, both men and women, have lived in prayer and contemplation, or have devoted themselves to the exercise of charity in every varied form;—surely we ought not long to hesitate in judging which of these two communions is the genuine representative of that family, of whom it is

* Catéchisme de Persévérance, tom. vi. p. 518.

written,—“the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.”*

LETTER VI.

THE mention of the contemplative orders, with which my last letter concluded, naturally brings to the mind the subject of religious books, which I must not omit to notice, because the unquestioned superiority of the Roman to the English Church in this particular, is a fact deserving serious consideration. “Why cannot any of you write with feeling and unction such as this?” asked James I. of his bishops, when he had read the “*Introduction à la vie dévote*,”† sent to him by Mary of Medici. “In contemplation and self-discipline,” (i. e. in the whole of religion, practical and devotional, objective and subjective,)

* This, and all the other Scripture quotations which occur in the course of these Letters, are made from the Protestant version of the Bible, because the person addressed being a Protestant, could not be supposed to recognize any other as of authority.

† A translation of this work, “adapted to the use of the English Church,” was licensed by Archbishop Laud’s chaplain. See an interesting letter in Laud’s *Autobiography*, p. 219.

says a revered teacher of the English Church,* “ the spiritual writers of foreign churches have, as yet, some obvious advantages over our own ;” and we know that many of the most excellent, both in this and other Protestant communions, have lived much in the study of these writers. The private devotions of Archbishop Laud borrow largely from the prayers of Catholics,—the devotions of Hickes and Cosin are formed on their very model : some of the most valuable portion of Jeremy Taylor’s works are “founded” on the “great moral writers of the Continental Church,—using their very words and terms of expression, giving their advice and their cautions.” In fact, the chapter on Meditation, of which this was especially said, is little more than an analysis of the scheme of the Spiritual Exercises, that all but inspired composition of St. Ignatius Loyola, which has been “wonderfully blest in the conversion of tens of thousands.” Bishop Wilson recommended the use of the *Spiritual Combat*:—Thomas à Kempis has been edited even by one of the Evangelical party : and Fenelon and Pascal are almost as familiar to Protestants as to Catholics themselves. You know further, that the deeper longings after religious fervour and strictness, which have been recently awakened in this country, have led to an increased study of the Roman ascetic writers ; so much so, that it has been found worth while to undertake a series of translations from their works, “adapted to the use of the

* Preface to *Avrillon’s Guide to Passing Lent Holily*, p. 11. and Preface to “*Year of Affections*,” p. 9.

English Church.” Are the spiritual writings of Protestants thus valued among Catholics? Has a single instance been known of an “adaptation” from an English Divine for the use of the Catholic Church? But you will say that the superiority of Catholic writers is to be attributed to the spiritual training and other privileges afforded by the religious houses. This will not hold good altogether, because S. Francis de Sales, and others, whose works have been popular in this country, were secular; but were it true, it only brings out more distinctly the character of that body, in which such cradles of sanctity have been abolished and disowned.

Thus far we have spoken of sanctity only in its higher degree; and on that we might fairly rest the whole question, because, as Aristotle says, “that kind is altogether best, whose excellence or pre-eminence is best;” but it may be more satisfactory to you if we pursue the comparison further, and consider the respective religious condition of the multitudes whose vocation lies in the world—that is, of the main body of each communion. It is obvious, however, that to enter into so vast a subject with anything like detail would be far beyond the compass of a letter, and would require much greater knowledge of facts than most men possess; I can but treat it here in a sketchy fragmentary way, noting down, as far as I am able, what happens to have come under my own observation.

The first thing which struck me when I began to frequent Catholic Churches was the intense devotion of the half-clad paupers, the very beggars, who are in

daily attendance there: there is something in the expression of their faces, especially when they approach the Blessed Sacrament, utterly unlike anything I had ever before seen in real life, and only reminding one of the pictures of Catholic Saints. If you could witness this for yourself, and contrast it with the almost total absence of the very poor from your public worship, and especially from your communions, I think you could not doubt which of the two religions takes deepest root in the hearts of the poor; and, considering that “to the poor” more especially “was the Gospel preached,” there is surely a strong presumption that the Church of the poor is the Church of Christ. This fervour of devotion, however, though most striking in the poor, seems equally to pervade all classes, and indeed is acknowledged on all hands as a marked characteristic of Catholicism. Hear the remarks of a Presbyterian traveller on this subject:* “Catholicism has certainly a much stronger hold over the human mind than Protestantism; the fact is visible and undeniable, and perhaps not unaccountable. The fervour of devotion among Catholics, the absence of worldly feelings in their religious acts, strikes every traveller who enters a Roman Catholic Church abroad.....In no place of worship do we witness the same intense abstraction in prayer, the same unaffected devotion of mind.....The public mind is evidently more religionized than in Protestant countries;” and he then proceeds to enquire: “Why should such strong devotional feeling be more

* Laing’s Notes of a Traveller, pp. 430, 448, &c.

widely diffused and more conspicuous among people holding erroneous doctrines, than among us Protestants holding right doctrines?" which very perplexing problem he at last solves thus: "Our belief is the working of judgment, theirs of imagination; and in this way we must account for the undeniably greater devotional fervour of Catholics than of Protestants."

But it is not in "devotional fervour" alone that the superiority of Catholicism is manifested. I am sure, many will join me in attesting that there is something in the character of ordinary Catholic society which strikes one at once as essentially and distinctively Christian. I do not mean that religious subjects are forced on one's attention in common talk—far from it; but (what is surely much more *real*, as well as more attractive,) the most trivial things are always spoken of in a religious spirit, and a religious tone pervades the whole conversation, so that whenever a direct reference is made to anything sacred, it is never felt to be jarring or out of place. Indeed, if one wished to characterize the Catholic temper, one might say that it consists in an open confession of Christ, so habitual as to be almost unconscious; and that, not only among ecclesiastics and men of studious lives, but among all classes alike—professional men, men of fortune, those engaged in trade: with all these, so far as my observation has extended, religion and attention to religious duties is taken for granted, in a way I never saw elsewhere; their faith seems present to their minds at all times as an inseparable part of themselves, and is openly recognized, or rather always implied, as the moving

spring of their whole course of action. I cannot, of course, for obvious reasons, speak on this subject in any but quite general terms: but of one thing I may remind you, because it is universally known. It is this: that the most ordinary Catholic, living in the midst of the most engrossing worldly occupations, must necessarily (if he obey his Church) lead a life which, among Protestants, would be called one of considerable restraint and self-denial. Only recollect, for instance, the severe rules of the Lenten fast, observed by all who are not dispensed on account of health, and imagine these kept by the multitude of men of business in your communion; remember, too, the practice of confession, which, I think, the majority of such persons among you would consider an intolerable humiliation, but to which all Catholics submit as often as they desire to approach that other sacrament which is the life of their souls: and I think you will agree with me that discipline such as this can hardly fail to impart to the character something at least of manly vigour and power over self, and, at the same time, of child-like frankness and humility; and certainly, if I may say it, such does seem to be its result to a remarkable degree.

Here you will probably bring against me the so often alleged immorality of Catholic countries as compared with our own, on which, therefore, it will be necessary to say a few words before we bring this subject to a close. I must, however, premise that, even if this charge be true, I cannot consider it a fair objection against the sanctity of the Church. The character of a Church, surely, can only

be judged of by the conduct of those who receive her teaching, and in the main obey her precepts; for to charge upon any system the failures of those who upon every point run counter to its principles, were to blame a physician for the death of a patient who refused to take his medicines, and pursued a regimen absolutely contrary to the one he had prescribed. Besides, the Church on earth is not triumphant, but militant; the very object of her existence is to fight against evil, wherever it is to be found; and that it is to be found within her own camp, is no more than her Lord warned her to expect: "Many are called, but few chosen;" the tares and wheat must grow together until the harvest; the good and bad fish are in the same net; and it is written that "It must needs be that scandals come." A man born in a Catholic country is called a Catholic in consequence of his baptism; but to *be* a Catholic, that is, to submit one's self to the Catholic system, must be in all cases an act of the individual will. There can be no mistake about it in the Catholic Church—a man must be either obedient or disobedient; and if he disobeys distinctly and consciously, that is, systematically and deliberately, he as really rejects the Catholic Church as if he became a Mahometan or a Pagan; and none of his sins ought in fairness to be ascribed to her, nor himself reckoned any more among her children, but her enemies. That such a one may fall into frightful depths of wickedness, I can easily conceive; and if the Roman Catholic Church be, what I believe her to be, the one Church of God, and the sole depositary of His sacramental grace, one would rather expect

that those who have rejected "so great salvation" would be more abandoned of God than those whose privileges have been less, for we are told that where the Gospel of God is not the "savour of life unto life," it is the "savour of death unto death."

But is it a fact that so-called Catholic lands are more immoral than our own?

Surely a very little examination will show us, that to every reflecting person the moral condition of England, at this moment, is a subject only of deep and sorrowful anxiety. Let us hear how it is described by the English clergy. Mr. Gresley* complains of "the desperate wickedness of the mass of our population, the general worldliness of all classes," "the immorality and atheism that abound." Arch-deacon Manning says,† "there is beneath the surface of our population a depth of iniquity almost without a precedent;" and Dr. Pusey, with equal earnestness: "There is in this Christian land such an intensity of sin and misery, such awful depth of wickedness and forgetfulness of God, that to know but some slight portion of it (I speak in plain words) makes the head reel and turn dizzy, and the heart faint. But that we do not yet see the unseen fires, one might of many places ask, Is this a Christian land, or is it hell?"‡ These are only a few of the most striking passages upon the subject, which happen to come to mind, but

* "Real Danger, &c." p. 6, 22.

† Sermon preached at St. George-in-the-Fields, May 8, 1844. p. 16.

‡ Sermons preached at Ilfracombe, 1844. p. 40.

they represent with sufficient force a state of things which surely gives us little reason to boast ourselves over Italy or Spain, or any other foreign country, whose evil report is in the mouths of Englishmen. And now, after having adduced this unexceptionable testimony from yourselves, I may be allowed to add, that I have been assured by Italian priests, resident in this country, that the villages and small towns, in which they find themselves located here as missionaries, present a picture of sin and sensuality, such as they had never witnessed—such as does not, in fact, exist—in the villages of their own native country; and that it is a task of exceeding difficulty to awaken in the minds even of those who become converts anything like an adequate sense of the enormity of their past guilt. If you doubt the truth of this statement, only look at the moral condition, I will not say of the masses of our manufacturing or commercial population, but of the agricultural labourers in your own and the adjoining villages: consider the conduct in life of those who were the most forward and promising scholars in your own national schools—how many have answered your expectations? how many have caused you bitter disappointment? For instance, how many have acted “advisedly and in the fear of God” in the most trying period of their lives? To speak plainly,—how many have you been able to join together in holy wedlock with feelings of satisfaction, believing that blessed ordinance to be to them really a “remedy against sin,” as your Church declares, and not rather an apology, as they think, and compensation for sin already committed? This

evil is so general among the poorer population of England, that its importance can hardly be exaggerated; and if we add to it the brutalizing sin of drunkenness, in which, confessedly, we are sunk below all other nations, we shall see that the religious condition of our Protestant country is no subject of boastful comparison with Catholic lands.

But, it may be said, whatever be the state of the case as to morals, it is certain that open infidelity is much more common in Catholic countries than it is here. This I can easily believe; and it is what I should rather expect from the more stringent character of the Catholic system, both as to faith and practice. If a Catholic once lets go his belief in any one of the doctrines of his Church, he soon finds that in rejecting one he rejects all, because, in rejecting any, he has already lost his faith in the authority on which he holds all, that is, the Church; a Catholic, in embracing any form of Protestantism, subverts the fundamental principle of his Christian life quite as much as if he became an infidel at once; and therefore it is this open form, for the most part, which his unbelief assumes; and, even if he begin by holding some Protestant creed, he generally strips it, sooner or later, of every thing dogmatic, and ends (as recent instances have miserably exemplified) in discarding all positive belief whatever. Among Protestants, private judgment as to the sense of Scripture, not Church authority, is generally recognized as the rule of faith; therefore, a man violates no principle in changing from one sect to another, and may explain away from his creed all that makes too large a demand

upon his faith, without ceasing to call himself a Protestant; and it is well known how convenient a resting-place is in fact afforded by Socinianism, to those who, but for it, would be professed unbelievers. From this difference between Catholicism and Protestantism it may surely be expected to result, that those who "have not faith," under the one system will alter Christianity to suit their own mind, and under the other will reject it altogether, because they find it unalterable. Then, again, in practice; there is little comparatively in Protestantism which requires self-sacrifice; a member of the Church of England, for instance, may be thoroughly irreligious at heart, and yet feel nothing in the system of his Church grievous enough to rouse him to the exertion of shaking it off; to fulfil his ordinary social duties, and even to attend public worship and go through the customary round of religious observances, can be no great hardship to him; and as long as he does this, none dare call him an infidel, and he may never be led to think enough on the subject of religion to be altogether conscious to himself that he is such; but, if this person had to keep strict fast for the forty days of Lent, to kneel at the tribunal of penance, and there confess his most secret sins, and crave the blessing of absolution, he would soon find himself, as it were, forced into a position of open rebellion; and it is, I believe, because the Catholic rules of practice are thus searching and stringent, and enter so minutely into the details of daily life, that they are absolutely intolerable to the love of indulgence, and especially to the pride of the worldly heart; and therefore in

Catholic countries, the opposition between the Church and the world is far more distinct than in England. How deadly is the hatred borne by the infidel party to the Church in Catholic lands, is sufficiently shown by those recent works of Michelet, Sue, and others, with translations of which our English press is now teeming; but to me this seems only a testimony that the Catholic Church is the true representative of that "rock of offence," concerning which it was said, "on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." It must not, however, be forgotten that there have been seasons in this country when infidelity has been almost universal, at least among the higher classes. Bishop Butler says of the state of things in his own time, "it is come to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a matter of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious; and, accordingly, they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule." After this confession, we are not surprised to hear that Leland and other writers "abundantly prove, that the poisonous plant of infidelity, which has produced such dreadful effects of late years on the continent, was transplanted thither from this Protestant island."*

One word more before we leave this subject of sanctity. We know that wonderful and mysterious things are spoken in holy writ of the saints of God:

* Milner's End of Controversy, Letter 8.

that our Lord himself declared that supernatural signs should follow them that believe; that, in fact, many of them wrought miracles—many had visions and revelations from the Lord—handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from the body of an apostle, fraught with miraculous power of healing,—there was virtue in the very shadow of an apostle, and evil spirits were cast out by the name of Jesus,—that these were signs of the Church in the apostolic age all alike admit: are there still such? and, if not, when did they cease? Protestants for the most part assume, though one cannot see on what ground, that all alleged miracles, excepting only those mentioned in Scripture, must necessarily be false; Catholics, on the other hand, read and believe that such things were in the days of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Martin, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, nay, of him of the same name, who was the apostle of England,* of St. Bernard, of St. Francis of Assisium, of St. Francis Xavier, of St. Alphonso Liguori, (canonized in 1839,) and indeed that no age has been entirely without them: and, knowing that Christ has promised to be with His Church always, even to the end of the world, it is not strange to them that the Church should

* See Newman's *Essays on Miracles*, p. 25—41. See also St. Aug. de Civ. Dei lib. xxii. c. viii. Serm. 286. 319. 322, 323. Tom. v. ed. Paris. Ven. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. lib. i. c. xxxi. ed. Giles. vol. 2. p. 144. Euseb. H. E. iv. 15. v. 28. Lactant. de Mort. Persee. x. Theodoret. H. E. v. 21. Iren. adv. Hær. ii. 56. Tertull. Apol. c. 23. Orig. c. Cels. i. 24. Justin. Dial. c. Tryph. 82. Apol. 2. 6.

look for the same signs of His presence now, as He has vouchsafed from the beginning. It would take us too long to enter on the subject; but Protestants ought to know, at least, this one fact, that the Catholic Church never presumes to enrol the name of any among the company of the saints, “until” in the words of St. Augustine* “she has been persuaded thus to honour them by some trustworthy tokens from God;” and, among these, one with which she now never dispenses, is that of miracles. With what jealous and scrupulous caution she examines them to satisfy herself that they are trustworthy, all Protestants, who have had opportunity of observing, bear witness; and it is among Catholics a proverbial saying, that “it is next to a miracle to prove a miracle at Rome.” Surely this subject ought to be calmly and carefully investigated, for, if God thus speaks and we refuse to hear, will not Tyre and Sidon rise up against us, to condemn us at the last day?

* De civ. Dei. lib. i. c. xxvi.

LETTER VII.

I THINK that I have now shown to the satisfaction of really candid inquirers, that the first two notes of Christ's Church, Unity and Sanctity in its only proper sense, belong to the Churches of the Roman obedience, not to the Established Church of this country. The third note, Catholicity, we might almost leave to be adjudged by the unpremeditated confession of our adversaries themselves; for the name of Catholic is the common title by which we are known throughout the world; and the members of every religious denomination whatever, so far as I know, excepting only the Irvingites and a small portion of yourselves, agree in conceding it to us without dispute; whilst, on the other hand, one of your own bishops has publicly disowned it for the Church of England, or at least condemned the continual use of it as "an affectation;"* and others of your clergy are allowed, without protest, to teach concerning the habit of "talking of a Catholic Church" at all, that it is a "contractedness," and of "boasting in English partialities as Catholic doctrine," that it is "a wretched littleness."† Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to conjecture what would have been the judgment of ancient

* The Bishop of Worcester.

† Mr. Bickersteth's Sermon, May 5, 1842.

Catholic doctors between us. "All heretics wish to be called Catholic," says St. Augustine,* "yet if any stranger ask, where do the Catholics hold their assembly, no heretic dare point to his own church or chapel." "The word Church," says St. Cyril,† "is applied to different things, and therefore the faith has delivered to thee, by way of security, the article, 'And in One Holy *Catholic* Church,' that thou mayest avoid the wretched meetings of the heretics, and ever abide with the Holy Church Catholic, in which thou wast regenerated. And if ever thou art sojourning in any city, inquire not simply where the Lord's house is, *nor merely where the Church is, but, where is the Catholic Church?* For this is the peculiar name of this holy Body, the Mother of us all, which is the Spouse of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God." These passages are very striking; and might well be considered conclusive; but that their applicability to us is sometimes disputed, because we are also called Roman Catholic; and it is moreover objected that there is something contradictory and self-condemning in this title, as though it represented a particular branch of the Church as equal to the whole, as itself *the Catholic Church*. To this it may be answered, first, that we call ourselves, and are quite as commonly called by others, simply Catholics, without any qualification at all; and secondly, that it is mere ignorance or wilful misrepresentation to attach any such meaning as

* Cont. Epist. Manich. iv. Tom. viii. p. 269.

† Catech. Lect. xviii. p. 252. Oxford Translation.

that I have mentioned to the title in question, because every body knows that the Roman Catholic Church is *not* one particular or national Church, but a union of very many national churches, as of Belgium, Austria, &c., and indeed of churches from among every people in the whole world, where Christianity itself is known. All these agreeing together, and holding communion one with another, in the unity of doctrine and the bond of peace, make up the Catholic Church, which, because it acknowledges the principality of the apostolic see, is also called Roman, just as St. Jerome and others, for the same reason, not unfrequently designate the faith of the Catholic Church simply as “the Roman faith.”*

Catholicity, however, is something more than a word and a name; it is also a fact; a real quality or character, whose presence or absence in any body of Christians can be easily ascertained; let us therefore examine it somewhat more attentively. “The most obvious and most general notion of the word” (Catholicity) says one of your own divines,† “consists in the diffusiveness of the Church, grounded upon the commission given to the builders of it: ‘Go, teach all nations.’” Which then is the most diffused, the Church of Rome, or the Church of England? Let us hear the testimony of an able Protestant writer upon this question.‡ “The Reformed churches were mere

* St. Hieronym. Epist. xv. sect. 4. ad Damasum Papam, Tom. 1. p. 41. Ed Venet, 1766. See other instances in the “Essay on Development,” p. 279. “Si Romana, ergo Catholica.”

† Pearson on the Creed, p. 523.

‡ Macaulay’s Essays, Vol. 3. p. 236.

national churches. The Church of England existed for England alone ; it was an institution as purely local as the Court of Common Pleas. The Church of Scotland, in the same manner, existed for Scotland alone. The operations of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, took in the whole world. Nobody at Lambeth or at Edinburgh troubled himself about what was doing in Poland or Bavaria. But Cracow and Munich were at Rome objects of as much interest as the purlieus of St. John Lateran."

The truth of this statement is abundantly confirmed by the actual condition of Christendom. An English churchman cannot find himself quite at home in spiritual matters even in Scotland or America ; for in the one Church he will find a liturgy containing, as it is said, doctrines against which his Church at home protests ; and in the other, a repudiation of the Athanasian creed, which, as he has learnt, "ought thoroughly to be received and believed ;" and if it be thus with respect to communions which are mere offshoots from your own, what shall we say of every other part of the world, where, as you well know, there are no Christians at all, excepting here and there congregations of your own countrymen, who by holding communion with you, will bear witness to your Catholicity. It is not strange then, that those clergy who are alive to the real state of things, should seek to discourage any of their flock from travelling into foreign countries ; they may well fear, lest, oppressed by a sense of their spiritual loneliness, such travellers should presently crave admission into a Church, Catholic in fact no less than in name ; a Church,

whose members, like the Christians of old, “if furnished with proper credentials from their bishop, may travel through the world from east to west, and from north to south, and be received to communion with their brethren in any part of the globe.” I have myself heard a young English Catholic priest mention that he had celebrated mass at the altar of every principal cathedral or church between Calais and Rome; and had he extended his travels far and far beyond, he would still have found brethren in the faith every where ready to welcome him.

I know it will be objected here, that though the Roman Church is certainly *more* extensively diffused than the English, yet she too has her limits; she is not really and truly Catholic, because she is not in communion with the Greek Church in Russia, nor with the Eutychians in Syria, &c.; but this is an objection which was answered for us by St. Augustin* nearly 1500 years ago: “The Novatians, Arians, Patripassians, Valentinians, &c.,” he says, “do not, as you justly observe, communicate with us. Nevertheless, wherever they are, there is the Catholic Church, just as she is also in Africa, where you (the Donatists) are; but not, wheresoever the Catholic Church is, there are either you, or any other of the various heresies: whence it is sufficiently apparent, which is the tree extending its branches with abundant fruitfulness over the whole earth, and which are the broken branches that have no life from the root, and are lying and withering each on its own ground.” Precisely in the same

* Contra Cresc. Don. lib. iv. 75. Tom. ix. p. 794.

way, in the very same words, might a Catholic answer now: "It is true that the Greek Church does not communicate with us, nor does the Church of England, nor the Nestorian Chaldæans, &c. Nevertheless, wherever they are, there are we—there is the Catholic Church: e. g. there is a Patriarchal Vicar Apostolic of Constantinople, with Catholic clergy and laity acknowledging his jurisdiction, both in Europe and Asia; there is a Catholic patriarch of Antioch among the Eutychians of Syria; eight Catholic dioceses and 1500 faithful brethren among the Chaldæan heretics;* just as in England and Scotland, where your Church is, there are yet eleven or twelve vicars apostolic, and 600 Catholic churches and chapels: but not, wheresoever the Catholic Church is, there are either you, or any other of the separated sects; whence," he may well continue with St. Augustin, "it is sufficiently apparent, which is the tree, whose branches extend to the ends of the earth, and which are the broken branches, lying each on its own ground."

These last words are full of meaning: for, in truth, if there be a special characteristic of the English Church, it is this of "lying in her own ground;" it has even been her boast from the beginning. The real struggle at the Reformation, as a high-church writer declares, was "between this island of the free on the one hand, and an Italian priest on the other:" and, if we read the history of

* Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, 1842. Vol. 3. p. 96—102.

this country for several centuries previous to that event, we shall see that it was at all times the policy of the government to loosen as far as possible the tie of obedience which bound their Church to Rome, and to disengage her from all foreign influence whatever—in a word, to nationalize her; that, being thus unsupported from without, she might become a mere appendage to the state, and so be the more helpless in the hand of the civil power. This design, so often frustrated, was at last, as we all know, too fully accomplished; and, since that period, the Church of England, instead of bewailing the loss of Christian brotherhood, has gloried in her separation; even at the present day one of her spiritual rulers* recommends that “the nationality of the English religion be secured by some energetic protest;” and it is surely on this principle only, (that of religion being a national matter,) that you can denounce us as “the Romanist schism in this country,” while acknowledging us to be Catholics elsewhere, as though there were some mysterious spell in British soil, whereby a priest who says mass at Calais, a devout Catholic in the morning, is transformed into a rebellious schismatic when he sings vespers in Dover in the evening. But, my dear friend, if Catholicity be a note of the Church, how is it possible that nationality should be such likewise? Are not the two principles absolutely antagonistic? Surely, when the wall of partition was broken down between Jew and Gentile, nationality ceased for ever to be the mark of God’s people. The Church was to

* Bishop of Oxford, May 16, 1846.

be a new kingdom,—the kingdom of God : gathering into herself all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues ; not that the nations thus gathered should continue so many independent bodies in the things pertaining to God ; but that they should all become “ one body ” animated by “ one spirit ; ” “ one fold under one shepherd ; ” with “ one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; ” one “ grain of mustard-seed,” which should expand into a great tree ; one stone, “ cut out without hands,” which should fill “ the whole earth.” Now, without entering into the question of the necessity of a central point from which this unity of the Church must emanate, and in which its supreme authority must reside, thus much at least is manifest, that, if the Church is to be thus one whole, the sovereignty of that whole over its parts must necessarily be absolute ; and their union with it and with one another indissoluble. It cannot therefore be lawful for any one of them to stand out alone, to fence itself round, as it were, from the rest, and to commence a separate existence. What says St. Cyril on this subject ? “ While the kings of particular nations have bounds set to their dominion, the Holy Catholic Church alone extends her illimitable sovereignty over the whole world.”* How little recognition of the independence of national Churches do we find in the practice of the early Church. We read that every church was obliged to “ communicate with every other church all over the world in all holy offices, in order to preserve the communion of worship one entire thing

* Catech. Lect. xviii.

throughout the whole Catholic Church, without division or distraction." The Council of Nice, "in order that all things might be done alike in all dioceses," made a canon, contrary to the practice of some, prohibiting genuflection in public worship on Sundays and during the Paschal season: the same holy synod declared it a thing "unlawful" that there should be any diversity of practice among Christians touching the time of the celebration of Easter; and ever afterwards the opposers of that decree were commonly censured as heretics or schismatics. The fourth council of Carthage, held before the end of the fourth century, decreed that any who should make a practice of fasting on the Lord's Day, should not be considered a Catholic. Surely the holy bishops who were assembled at those councils, would not have long hesitated in denying the title of Catholic to a national body, severed, like the English Church, from the "Universal brotherhood," in faith, in discipline, in sacraments, and in communion.

And not only is this principle of nationality repugnant to ancient practice, but it is, at the same time, fatal to the very existence of the Church which adopts it. The Church of England, for instance, began with separating herself from the Church Universal, and rejecting both doctrines and sacraments which were received throughout Christendom; then, immediately placing herself in the position of the Church from which she had revolted, she claimed submission from her children, and denounced as schismatics all who dissented from her. But, on what plea could she justify her departure from the

Universal Church, which would not equally justify her children in departing from her? If she be Catholic in spite of her separation, why may they not continue Catholic, though separated from her? If it be said that Catholicity lies in the episcopate, each separate bishop being the centre of unity in his own diocese, and so, in some sense, himself an entire church, then at least her bishops may separate from her, or rather from each other, and there may be as many churches as dioceses. Supposing, for instance, the Bishop of Calcutta, with some other of your foreign bishops, or two or three of your bishops at home, should join together in a new communion, casting off the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as he once cast off that of the Pope, and remodelling the doctrine and discipline now received in the Church of England according to what they may consider a purer and more primitive type, what would prevent a communion thus established from being as Catholic as that which it had left? It is manifest that the principle of the independence of national churches and their completeness within themselves, to be consistently held, must be grounded on that of the civil supremacy, thus making the institutions of the Church follow those of the world; and this theory many of the English divines unhesitatingly adopt; laying it down, that “every people under one prince, or at least of one nation, using the same language, civil law and fashions, should be united in the bands of ecclesiastical polity;” and Barrow* presses this

* Unity of the Church, in fin.

principle so far, as to consider “the voluntary consent or command of princes” as a sufficient reason for “adhering in confederation” even to the Roman Church. Indeed, as all heresy and schism, being the fruit of individual pride, have “tended to insulate man, and to reduce every thing by sub-division;” so the main principle of Protestantism has been well described,* as “National independence,—the proper expression of the temporal element of society,—in opposition to the idea of a sacerdotal religion, supreme and predominant over all temporal power.” But that Church has a feeble hold over the consciences of men, whose most powerful claim to their obedience is, that it is the religion by law established; for there are few who take so high a view of civil government, as to believe it to be the commissioned and infallible interpreter of God’s holy Revelation. How different is the strength of that Church whose whole system is pervaded by Catholicity, as by a force unseen, yet of living energy, where the voice of every national Communion, of every Archbishop, of every Bishop, of every Priest, nay, of every individual in any way commissioned to teach, is the voice of the whole Church; and therefore where every local authority, which in itself would be as nothing, is irresistible in its derived power.

Thus then the case stands;—the English Church is a mere national communion; a “branch,” as she is fond of terming herself, but a “branch” into which no sap flows from any other branch, nor from any

* Ranke’s History of the Popes.

main stem;—a branch utterly cut off, and lying, as has been said, “on her own ground;”—while the Roman Church, on the other hand, is as a tree which filleth the land; “the hills are covered with the shadow of it; and the boughs thereof are like the goodly cedar trees:” of her might the Ancient Father† speak, as he spoke of the Church in his own day:—she is a “rich and fruitful vine with many branches, and the varied tresses of many a tendril: not everywhere indeed having large clusters, not having every grape full swelled; some have suffered from the winter-cold, others from the rough hail, others from the burning heat of summer; one bud is studded thicker with shoots, another is stronger, another cleaner: one bursts forth into fruit, another only into exuberance of leaves; yet is she everywhere a vine, in every part beautiful.”

* It is well known that the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel was originally formed and chartered for *the colonies* only; this therefore did not, until very recently, interfere with the “nationality of the English religion.” The Church Missionary Society is also of recent date; indeed Mr. Bickersteth truly says, concerning the Church of England, “the Missionary character of the Church had been lost, it had become in our day a new commandment.”

† St. Pacian, Ep. iii. sect. 50. See Oxford Translation, p. 360.

LETTER VIII.

You say that in my last letter I did not state the one real ground on which the Church of England rests her claim to Catholicity, viz: agreement in Christian doctrine with the Catholic Church of the early centuries. You say that she holds the three Catholic Creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian; and that on all points, not specified in those Creeds, she throws herself on the consent of all the Catholic doctors of the first four or five centuries; that the Church of that period being Catholic, the Church of England, perfectly coinciding with her in belief, must needs be Catholic also; that the Church has no right* to impose new articles of faith, that the

* It is sometimes said that the Council of Ephesus in its seventh Canon, distinctly prohibited any further development of the Christian creed, as though it were possible for the Church in any age, so to limit the power of the Church in all future ages, as to deprive her of the privilege of defining articles of faith against any new heresy that might arise. The occasion of the canon in question, (a subtle attempt to impose a Nestorian creed,) its very language, (*ἐτέραν πίστιν παρὰ τὴν ὀρισθῆσαν*,) the manner in which the same law was afterwards expressed by the third council of Constantinople, ("any newly-invented phrases, *to the subversion of* those things already defined,") no less than reason itself, sufficiently determine the sense of the canon. Moreover, if it be interpreted otherwise, how does the Church of England justify her use of the Athanasian creed, or of the *Filioque* in the Nicene?

Roman Church has imposed Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Intercession of Saints, Veneration of Relics, &c., which were unknown to primitive times; these doctrines therefore she repudiates as Roman, while she accepts all that are Catholic.

Now, before we consider whether the Church of England can really bear this test, let us briefly enquire whether it is a fair one in itself; for, though Anglicans are apt to assume this as self-evident, yet serious objections seem to me to lie on its very surface; for, if this be indeed the test by which we must determine a Church's Catholicity, then Catholicity is not that simple and obvious note of the true Church which one would expect it to be from its being put forward in the Creed, and which St. Cyril, St. Augustin, and others, represent it; for the common consent of all Catholic doctors can only be gathered by one deeply read in Ecclesiastical Antiquity.

And further: if the Church has no right now to require as a guarantee of Catholicity any thing beyond the acceptance of the Creeds of the first three centuries, what right had she in the days of Macedonius, for instance, to require more than the Nicene Creed as originally drawn up; or, in the days of Arius, to require more than the Creed of the Apostles? nay, if you deny her all power of explaining, or in any way amplifying, what she has once enunciated, the original profession of faith, (as accepted by Philip from the Ethiopian,) ought to have been left in its simplicity, and "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," should have been for ever a confession distinct

enough to declare a man a Catholic ; for it cannot be denied, that each additional article of the Creed was necessarily a means of narrowing the limits of the Church by excluding some. Many, as you know, hold that the Church overstepped her prerogative in dogmatizing at all ; and this is an intelligible opinion : but to allow her that power at one period, and to deny it her at another, seems altogether unreasonable.

You will answer me that the Church was Catholic, and of infallible authority, so long as she continued One, but that when the Greek Church broke off from her, her inspiration, her authority, and her Catholicity passed away together ; or rather were shattered into fragments, a portion abiding with the one Church, and a portion with the other ; so that after that separation, we have no means of knowing what is the real mind of the collective Church, except by looking back to the records of the time when it was One. The question of the Greek schism is far too extensive, and too much beyond the scope of my present knowledge for me to enter upon. I would only say, that, in thus representing Catholicity as of a divisible nature, you destroy its very idea, at least as it was understood by the early Fathers. It is always spoken of by them, as, like Unity, an inalienable note of the true Church, and of it alone ; so that to suppose the existence of two independent bodies, both in an equal measure Catholic, and neither such altogether ; or to suppose that the true Church has at any time suffered, or is capable of suffering, a loss of Catholicity, or that Catholicity admits of

degrees at all, would be, in their opinion, to suppose a contradiction. In fact, your theory plainly interpreted is simply this; that Catholicity has ceased for the present to be a note of the Church, that is, that the promises of Christ to her are, for the present, suspended; which is a belief so repugnant to the letter of Scripture, so contrary to the expectation of the early Church, and so very distressing in itself, that it requires stringent proof.

But you will say, look at the fact; here is a manifest division in the Christian world; the eastern churches and the western are out of communion; and what reason have I to determine that Catholicity inheres exclusively in either of these branches, so that the other is cut off from it? Our own belief on this subject, it would of course be useless to state; but the case, even as it appears on a *prima facie* view, is one which deserves your serious consideration. There is, as you well know, one portion of the Church, and one only, which claims to be, in an especial sense, the seat of her vitality; in which vitality, if we may trust the language of the ancient fathers, Catholicity is included as an essential element. Now, surely, that there should be one portion of the Church more vital than another cannot be considered as otherwise than antecedently probable, whether we look to analogy, or to the nature of the case. Consider, for instance, the structure of the natural body, to which the Church is so often compared in Scripture. We know that “we may lose several limbs, all organs of sense, and even the greatest part of our bodies, and yet remain the same living agents that we were before;” while,

on the other hand, there are parts which we cannot lose, without at the same time losing life. And further we know that perpetual existence is guaranteed to the Church by the promise of her Lord ; and—considering that her Body is of vast extent, and subject, as history demonstrates, to sundry changes and the lopping off of many and important limbs—we cannot see, humanly speaking, how the fulfilment of this promise can be adequately secured, except there be some one portion of her substance in which, by the appointment of God, vitality is indissolubly inherent. This antecedent probability would of course go for nothing, if there were no correspondent claim made ; but such a claim being made, it is surely a corroboration of it ; and the fact, that all parties would allow—a centre of Catholicity being once admitted—that it can be none but Rome, ought, in fairness, to be considered a further corroboration ; neither ought the present recognition of her claim by so many national churches to be altogether without weight.

It is usually urged by Anglicans as altogether conclusive, that in the earlier ages there was no consciousness in the Church of any central point, in which her life thus especially resided ; but, even supposing this true, it does not seem to me to decide the question, because it may have been God's will, that experience alone should discover to His Church this secret of His counsel ; it may be only experience which has taught us what parts of our body are vital ; and if indeed* it was her immunity

* See "Bowden's Life of Gregory VII." Book 1. Chapter 1.; and Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. i. p. 11.

from heresy, when one Church after another had been corrupted by it;—the wisdom of her decisions, as prelates and people appealed to her from far and near;—her missionary zeal and miraculous success, which gradually led to the recognition of the Church of Rome as that centre of vitality, the “*radix et matrix ecclesiæ Catholicæ*,”* I cannot see how this impugns her claim to be such of divine right. In point of fact, however, we need only the admissions of Protestant controversialists themselves to show us, that it is a deceit to pretend that, in those centuries to which the English Church appeals as her standard, there are no traces of the Roman supremacy; there may not be sufficient irresistibly to confute us, if we set out with the assumption that her claims are certainly false; but more than sufficient to convince us, if we set out with the belief that they *may* be true. It would be dwelling too long on this subject to give many instances; but what I have mentioned in a former letter, that the Catholic faith is often simply designated the “*fides Romana* ;” the well-known address of St. Ignatius (almost in the apostolic age) to “the Church which presides ;” the saying of St. Irenæus, “that Church to which all others must resort, *propter potio-rem principalitatem* ;” that of St. Cyprian, that “error in faith, or misbelief, can have no access to it ;” that of St. Gregory Nazianzen, that “ancient Rome hath the right faith from of old, and always retains it, as it becometh the city, which is mistress of the whole

* S. Cypr. Epist. 48. Ed. Lipsiæ, 1838.

world, always to hold the full and entire faith ;” the letter of St. Jerome, requesting the pope to tell him with which of three rival bishops in Syria he should communicate, because, “ If any one is united to the see of Peter,” he says, “ he is mine ;” the almost axiomatic saying of St. Ambrose, “ Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia ;” the confident appeal of St. Optatus even to the Donatists, that they could not deny that “ whoever resisted the chair of Peter was a schismatic ;” * all these and many other passages which might be adduced, surely tend rather than otherwise to the confirmation of the Roman claim. I know that it is possible to evade the force of these passages taken singly ; at least it has been attempted, and in some instances with better success than in others ; but how it is proposed to overthrow their full cumulative force, when connected and combined, I know not ; certainly it is impossible, upon any grounds of reasoning which would be considered trustworthy and safe in practical matters of common life. Thus too the promise to St. Peter, “ on this rock I will build my Church,” must have had some distinct meaning at the moment when it was spoken by our Lord ; if indeed there were nothing in the present state of the Christian Church, which seemed to answer to it, then it would be natural to conclude

* St. Ignat. Ep. ad Rom. init. St. Hieron. Ep. ad Damasum, XV. St. Ambr. Expos. in Ps. xl. St. Opt. contr. Don. lib. 2. c. 3. The other passages with their *interpretations* may be seen in Laud’s Conference with Fisher, Barrow on the Pope’s Supremacy, &c.

that meaning to have been something mysterious and hidden ; or to explain it, as some do, of St. Peter not personally, but merely as a type of the collective Apostolate ; but, as there is a wonderful fact which does entirely answer to it, to regard it as other than a prophecy of that fact, is to deal with it in a way quite contrary, surely, to any general principle of interpretation recognized by any party.

Now that Rome makes the great claim in question, with something at least to be said in its corroboration, while the Greek Church claims nothing of the kind, I must think an important feature in the case ; more especially, as the test of Catholicity, which I quoted in my last letter from St. Augustine, is applicable here also ; inasmuch as in the regions of the East are many churches in the Roman obedience, but none in Western Europe who own allegiance to the East. This is surely enough to prevent your laying it down as self-evident, that when that unhappy severance took place, a portion of the Church's Catholicity was torn away ; it rests clearly with yourselves to show why this particular secession really divided the living Body of Christ, when you do not pretend that the previous schisms of Arians, Nestorians, or Donatists, had wrought any such fatal injury.

You must also consider (what no one pretends to dispute) that the Greek and Roman Churches are and have been ever since their separation, fully agreed on almost all the points of doctrine and practice, in which the English Church considers the Roman to have departed from primitive teaching ; and therefore

we may fairly conclude that they were agreed on the same points, previous to their separation ; it follows from this, that the whole Church, then (according to the theory we are considering) undeniably Catholic, because one and undivided, was nevertheless (according to the same theory) uncatholic, inasmuch as it had departed from primitive teaching ; yet you admit that, so long as the Church continued One and Catholic, so long she continued infallible ; how then came this infallible Church to depart from primitive teaching, that is, to fall into error ? And further, as the Greek and Roman Churches both taught error, and were therefore uncatholic, it follows that from the close of the primitive period (whenever that was) until the birth of the present English Church, there was no Catholic Church whatever. Now it certainly requires strong evidence to convince one of this ; to make one really believe that Catholicity, after living and energizing in the Church for three, four, or five centuries, fell, as it were, into a charmed slumber, and continued thus spell-bound age after age, until, when ten or eleven centuries had passed away, she was suddenly discovered and awakened by the touch of some master hand in this remote island.

Having thus examined whether the test of Catholicity to which you appeal is a fair one, it remains to consider whether the Church of England can really abide it successfully. You will not, I think, deny that to make out her claim to Catholicity on this ground, you must prove that in the main and on the whole she approximates more nearly than the Church of Rome to identity of doctrine and practice with the

primitive Church. No one will question the fairness of this statement; I have even put it more favourably for the English church than strict justice requires; for considering her position relatively to Rome, a very strong case of identity on her own part, and discrepancy on that of her antagonist, ought surely to be made out, in justification of her having thrown off an authority acknowledged for centuries, and severed herself from the rest of Christendom. But do you really believe that, *as a whole*, her system is more congenial than the Roman to that of early times? that the Saints, or the ordinary Christians, of the first, second, third, or fourth centuries, if permitted to revisit earth, would find themselves more at home with you than with us? Take the respective systems of each Church; their dogmatic formularies, articles of faith, creeds, catechisms and homilies; their liturgies, hymns, prayers, religious observances and ceremonial, keeping of fast and festival, all that pertains to outward worship; take too their inward spirit, as exhibiting itself in their spiritual books, their institutes, the life and conversation of their children, with much else that might be named; and then say which, both in outward semblance and inward spirit, is most resembling the Church of our fathers. I do not think any honest inquirer, Catholic or Protestant, would hesitate for a moment what answer to give. When, however, this appeal to antiquity is made by Anglicans as aggressive against Rome, you well know that it is never done by thus comparing the systems as a whole, but by bringing forward this or that doctrine as taught by the Roman Church, and

asserting (generally from the negative evidence of silence,) that it was not so taught in earlier times. And even in these details they have not dealt fairly by us, for they have generally contented themselves with pointing out what they conceive to be a discrepancy between the Roman and primitive doctrines on some particular subject, without examining whether the English doctrine on the same subject be more or less like the primitive than is the Roman.

Take, by way of example, the doctrine of the holy Eucharist. Anglicans say, the adoration now paid to the Host has no sufficient warrant in early times ; that the festival of Corpus Christi, for instance, was not instituted, nor the doctrine of transubstantiation definitely taught, until the 13th century : therefore, the Roman Church and the Primitive are at variance on this point. But does the teaching of the English Church on this same point agree better with antiquity ? In what authorized document, in what Christian Father do we find that, in kneeling at the communion, “ no adoration is intended ;” that it is “ contrary to the truth of Christ’s natural body to be in two places at once ;” that “ it is in heaven, and not here,” as we are formally instructed by her rubric ; or that it is a mere figure, and not in any literal sense the body and blood of Christ, as the great mass of her children believe ? How can this teaching be reconciled with what St. Cyril* says, “ Since He has Himself declared and said of the bread, This is my body, who shall dare to doubt any longer ? And since He has

* Catech. Lect. xxii. Oxford Translation.

affirmed and said, This is my blood, who shall ever hesitate, saying that it is not His blood? He once turned water into wine in Cana of Galilee, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? What seems bread is not bread, though bread by taste; and what seems wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the blood of Christ. This bread is bread before words of consecration, (*verba sacramentorum*,) but when the consecration has come, from bread it becomes the body of Christ.....It was not the body of Christ before the consecration, but I tell you that, after the consecration, it is straightway the body of Christ. He spake, and it was made; He commanded, and it was created.....Wine and water are put into the chalice, but it becomes blood by the consecration of the heavenly Word.” Or to turn to the ancient liturgies, which are now so well known among the clergy of your school, with which of them can the rubric we have quoted or the common belief of English churchmen be brought into harmony? If we look deeper into this subject, and consider the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice, that, as you know, is not only utterly disbelieved by your people, but was formally and advisedly expunged* from your prayer-book, after having been for some time retained, has been repudiated by a decree of one of your ecclesiastical courts, and is condemned in one of your articles, which declares that “the sacrifices of masses, in the which it

* See the history of the change, in No. 81, of the “Tracts for the Times.”

was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits:" yet in the ancient liturgies, to which I have alluded, mention is made of the "unbloody sacrifice." St. Cyril* says, "When we offer to God our supplications for those who have fallen asleep, though they be sinners, we offer up Christ sacrificed for our sins, propitiating our merciful God both for them and for ourselves;" "believing that it will be a very great advantage for the souls for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is presented." St. Augustin too:† "It is not to be doubted that by the prayers of holy Church, and the saving sacrifice and alms which are expended for their souls, the dead are aided, that the Lord should deal more mercifully with them than their sins have deserved. For *this tradition of the Fathers the Universal Church observes*, that for them who have deceased in the communion of the body and blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their proper place at this sacrifice, prayer be made, and *it be announced* that that sacrifice is offered for them also." So also St. Ambrose‡ bids us not doubt "but that angels are present round our altars when Christ is immolated." But I need not multiply instances; you know yourself that you cannot turn to a page in the writings of the Fathers, without finding

* Catech. Lect. xxiii.

† Hom. in Nov. Test. 122. Oxford Translation, p. 385.

‡ Expos. in Luc. I. 742. 28. Ed. Venet. 1781.

much more to the same effect. The question, then, seems to me to be this: "If the present Roman Catholic Church differs from the early Church, as Anglicans assert, by having defined the mode of our Lord's presence in the holy Eucharist, and by paying to Him thus present more frequent and fervent adoration, the English Church, as we have seen, differs also, but in another way; by speaking doubtfully, at least, concerning the real presence itself, where the early Church spoke with unmistakeable distinctness; by being cold in her homage to that blessed mystery, where the early Church was full of intense devotion; by treating the altar in God's house with no especial reverence, nay, by partially, if not entirely suppressing its very name—whereas, in primitive times, it was the very central spot of the Christian's veneration: and I leave it to your own honest judgment to determine which of these two "differences" is the greatest, and with which of the two communions our fathers in the faith would feel most sympathy. I cannot myself doubt but that St. Augustin, at least, would seek one of those places of worship where he would find the "tradition of the Fathers" universally observed; where he would hear it given out, day after day, almost in his own words, "Your prayers are requested for the soul of —, who died last night, and for whom the sacrifice of the mass will be offered up to-morrow."

If we carried on our examination through all the details of doctrine in which the Church of England differs from the Church of Rome, I am persuaded that the result would be the same: we

should find in the Roman system, at most, the expansion, in the Anglican, the absolute contradiction, of the primitive idea. Thus, prayers for the dead, we know, have been universal in the Church from the very beginning; these the Church of England has utterly abolished: therefore, even if her assertion were true, that the interpretation of the purpose of those prayers, in the form of the doctrine of purgatory, was not given till a later age, still one cannot doubt which would be most in harmony with the mind of the early Church, to believe in purgatory, or to discontinue prayers for the dead. Auricular confession, you say, was not systematically enforced for the first few centuries; but you cannot doubt but that the absolving power of the priest was then universally believed as fully as it now is in the Roman Church, nor that, in all cases of heavy sin, confession and satisfaction were required of the penitent as the condition of being restored by absolution to the communion of the faithful. In the English Church all this is practically disbelieved; for, though she asserts something of it in her prayer-book, yet she suffers her thousands and tens of thousands to go to their graves laden with the guilt of mortal sin, unconfessing and unabsolved. * So, too, with respect to the invocation of saints, and veneration of relics: one fact, such as the order given by St. Ambrose to dig for the bodies of martyrs, that he might have their relics to place under the altars of his church; one story, such as that told by St. Gregory Nyssen of a prisoner delivered from death by the intercession of St. Ephrem, is indication sufficient of

the mind of the ancient Church. Consider, too, the following narrative, taken at random from many told by St. Augustin in one of his most celebrated works :* “ There was a certain old man in this our town of Hippo, called Florentius, a religious man and poor, maintaining himself as a tailor. He lost his garment, and had not wherewithal to buy himself another ; wherefore he prayed with a loud voice to the twenty martyrs (whose memory is much honoured among us) that he might be clothed. Some mocking youths, who happened to be present, laughed at him.As he walked on in silence, he saw a great fish cast on the shore, which he took and sold for 300 pence (follibus) to a certain cook named Catosus, a good Christian, telling him what had happened. The said cook, cutting up the fish, found inside it a gold ring, and straightway, melted with compassion and struck with awe, he restored it to the man, saying, “ See how the twenty martyrs have clothed you.” He gives also many instances of miracles wrought at the intercession or by the relics of St. Stephen ; one of which was the conversion of a man of rank named Martial, whose daughter and son-in-law were Christians, but who was himself hostile to the faith. After many vain attempts to convince him, once, when he was sick, his son-in-law repaired to the shrine (memoriam) of St. Stephen, and there, after having prayed for his conversion with great fervour, took one of the flowers from the altar, and laid it on his pillow while he slept. Before dawn, he awaked

* De civ. Dei, lib. xxii. c. 8. s. 9.

suddenly, and called for baptism. These are only specimens from a great number of similar narratives, which he gives at length ; but I think they are enough to show us where the sympathies of that ancient father would find a home on earth : not, surely, with those who, while they read with interest of the “glorious cloud of witnesses” belonging to the old covenant, sever themselves utterly in spirit from the saints, martyrs, and confessors of the new ; thus, looking back on that long space of eighteen centuries which lies between us and our Lord’s Ascension as one unpeopled waste ; but rather with those whom I have lately seen lying prostrate before the altars while the choir, in plaintive litanies, called on our glorified brethren to pray for us to their Lord and ours.

I forbear from mentioning further instances, though I am persuaded that, the more you examine, the more you will see cause to agree with the judgment once expressed by a dignitary of your Church,* that “primitive Christianity was nothing more nor less than modern popery ;” neither am I proposing what I have already adduced as confirmations or proofs of the doctrines of the Roman Church, for she admits of no appeal from herself, but only to show that, if the primitive type does not exist in the Roman Church, neither does it exist in the English ; and to leave it to you to judge which of the two systems is most akin to it, and whether the English Church can fairly make out her claim to Catholicity

* Archdeacon Middleton.

on the ground you state. For myself, I can only say, that even my partial acquaintance with the writings of the Fathers, long before I was a Catholic, had brought before me many startling passages which I found hard to reconcile with English teaching, and had produced in my mind a general impression of strangeness and incongruity, and a painful feeling that I was not in entire sympathy with the ancient days; whereas, now, the acceptance of Roman doctrine has given a meaning and consistency to what were before floating incoherencies, or even positive perplexities, in my creed—which, nevertheless, I had derived entirely from that source to which my own communion directed me, the teaching of the Primitive Church; it has also given me, as it were, the key wherewith to open the secret treasures of Holy Scripture, and it has made me feel, whether I read the Acts of the Apostles or the writings of the Fathers, that I am really in the same Church with them—the Church alike of all ages, as of all places, One, indefectible, and Catholic.

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LETTER IX.

THE fourth and last note of the true Church which we have now to consider, Apostolicity, you fearlessly claim for the Church of England ; because, as you say, her present bishops derive their orders, through an unbroken succession, from St. Augustin and his brethren, who were themselves of undoubted apostolical descent ; and you say, further, that this claim is tacitly acknowledged even by Rome herself, inasmuch as she has never formally declared the English orders invalid.

Now, this whole question is much too intricate for either you or me to enter upon in anything like detail ; for to examine it rightly would require more ecclesiastical learning than we possess. But, with respect to this last assertion, that Rome has not pronounced upon the English orders, even if it be true in the letter, I am sure the impression which it conveys is false ; for has she not pronounced upon them to all intents and purposes, when every clergyman of the Church of England who embraces the Catholic faith, and desires to become a Catholic priest, is required to be ordained *de novo* and unconditionally, just in the same way as any lay candidate ? This is, at least, a practical decision on the question ; and that Rome has so decided is a fact which, I think,

ought to have some weight even with you, when you remember that she has no interest in denying or representing as doubtful the orders of those communions which have separated from her, because, according to her theory, such separation is in itself enough to constitute schism; and, moreover, that she does acknowledge the validity of orders in the Greek Church, the Armenian, and other heretical bodies in the East, so as not to require re-ordination from any of their priests who return to her obedience. This ought in fairness to suggest to you the enquiry, whether there be not some special flaw in the English succession, discernible to her experienced eye, which renders it nugatory.

What this flaw is, we need not here enquire; but so few, even of the party to which you belong, trouble themselves to look into the history of the English Reformation, while they are taught to assume the validity of English orders as a matter altogether beyond dispute, that I think it may be well to mention a few facts, which may perhaps be new to you, and which will show that there is, at least, some room for question.

Perhaps you are not aware that, though during the reign of Henry VIII. no further change was made in the Roman Pontifical than the omission of the oath of obedience to the pope, yet, in king Edward's time, an entirely new service was prescribed, both for the ordering of priests and deacons, and for the consecration of bishops. This service was quite different, in many important particulars, from the one then in use in the Church. For instance, in the con-

secration of a bishop, the form of words which accompanied the laying on of hands was such as might have served with equal propriety for the ordination of a priest or deacon, or even for the confirmation of a layman;* and no mention was made, in any part of the service, of conveying to the candidate the power of conferring orders. These defects are the more important, because Cranmer, Barlow, and several others, who were principally concerned in framing the new ordinal, had on a previous occasion distinctly affirmed that consecration was not necessary; that princes might, by their own authority, appoint priests and bishops, and that such appointment alone was sufficient; nay, some went so far as to say that the only reason why the Apostles made bishops on their own authority was, that there were at that time no Christian princes to whose orders they might submit themselves.† However, be the cause what it may, the fact is indisputable, that the form of words then

* It may be worth while to specify the changes made in the form of consecration at the Savoy conference. In king Edward's book it stood thus: "Take the Holy Ghost, and remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by imposition of hands; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and of soberness." In the new Ritual of the time of Charles II, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands, for God" &c. The following question was at the same time *added* to those, which were to be put to the Bishop elect: "Will you be faithful in ordaining, sending, or laying hands upon others?"

† Collier, ix. 201, 205, &c.

used for the consecration of a bishop was very indeterminate; and that it so continued until the reign of Charles II., when an important alteration was made, and the form now in use first introduced. Six bishops had been consecrated according to this first Protestant ritual during the reign of Edward; but upon the accession of his sister, Mary, it was ordered by the Catholic bishops and other able divines, that they should, if found worthy, “receive that which was wanting to them, seeing that they were not yet ordered in very deed.”* Then came Queen Elizabeth, who restored her brother’s ordinal, and having deprived all the Catholic bishops, except one, proceeded to order the consecration of others according to the Protestant form. But here a new difficulty presented itself; no Catholic bishop could be found to execute her will; and the ceremony was at last performed by three of those bishops who had been deprived in the preceding reign, acting under a commission from the queen, in which she undertook “to supply by her own supreme authority all that should be done upon this occasion contrary to the usages of the realm or to the ecclesiastical laws.”

Such is a brief history of the origin of the present English episcopate. Remember, I do not give it as positive proof that the succession was broken, or as involving insuperable difficulties of any kind whatever; but only that you should at least know the facts of the history, and, therefore, no longer assume it as a demonstrated truth, that the apostolical succession

* Collier, vi. 64.

is yours; and further, I would remind you that the French Defence of your orders, which you all value so highly, was authoritatively condemned, and that its author died a heretic even upon the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Moreover, if you ever read that defence itself, I think you will not consider its arguments so conclusive as they have been represented to you: e. g., it is no sufficient apology for the defective form of consecration to say that it contains as much as was expressed in the most ancient rituals, any more than it would be a sufficient justification for one who refused the Athanasian creed to say that he retained that of the Apostles. To reject an article that has been once defined is a very different thing from not having consciously held that article before such definition. So, in like manner, to abolish all the usual rites in the consecration of bishops, substituting for them a form of words not even irreconcilable with Presbyterianism, gives some ground to suspect that episcopacy was retained only for form's sake; or at least with a very different design from that hitherto entertained by the Church, and rather as a civil than an ecclesiastical dignity.

Again, it is false to plead that the exercise of supremacy by Queen Elizabeth, in depriving the Catholic bishops, was no more than that of her predecessor in depriving Protestant bishops: for Mary was supported by the authority of the Holy See; all the sentences of deposition issued in her reign were pronounced by bishops, and by them only; the bishops deprived had either been notoriously guilty of a breach of vows,

or were such as only pretended to “hold their bishoprics by letters patent of king Edward VI., during good behaviour”* (quàm diù se benè gesserint); and moreover she only reversed, by royal authority, innovations that had been made by the same authority in the preceding reign; whereas Elizabeth, on the contrary, not only placed herself in an attitude of defiance with respect to the Holy See, but carried on her measures of reform against the express protest of the whole episcopate of the country, and of every other ecclesiastical authority; and having usurped to herself all manner of spiritual power and jurisdiction, delegated it by letters patent, under the great seal, to a commission formed almost exclusively of *laymen*, which commission proceeded to deprive the Catholic bishops for refusing a new and uncanonical oath. I will not examine any further details of the Defence, because, as I have already said, it is only my purpose to show that the Apostolic origin of your bishops is at least not a simple, clear, and incontrovertible fact; that there are grave difficulties connected with it, which none but men of eminent ecclesiastical learning are at all able to grapple with—perhaps even they unable to overcome.

And if, instead of limiting the enquiry to the mere validity of orders, we extend it to spiritual jurisdiction, it becomes more complicated still; yet this is of course included in the idea of Apostolicity, otherwise there might be two rival churches in the same place, both Apostolical, because both having the succession

* Collier, vi. 65.

—which you would be the first to deny. What, then, is the condition of the Church of England in this particular? Whence St. Augustin, to whom she must look as the founder of her hierarchy, derived his jurisdiction is universally known. No one ever attempted to deny that he came straight from Rome, sent as a missionary by St. Gregory the Great; that, so soon as he found that the people were likely to embrace the faith, he went, according to the commands which he had received from the holy father, Gregory, to Ætherius, archbishop of Arles, and was by him consecrated bishop over the nation of the Angles; that pope Gregory sent him the pall, and wrote to him to the effect, that he should consecrate twelve bishops, who should be subject to his rule; that he should send a bishop to York, who, in case of that city and neighbourhood receiving the faith, should ordain other twelve bishops; and the letter continues,* “not only those bishops whom yourself shall consecrate, or those who shall be consecrated by the bishop of York, but also all the priests in Britain you shall hold subject to you, by the will of our God and Lord Jesus Christ,” &c. Nothing can be more explicit than this; no other source can be mentioned whence St. Augustin drew his spiritual jurisdiction, but only the Apostolic See: surely then the bishops of the present Church of England can scarcely pretend to be the inheritors of that jurisdiction, when they repudiate the authority of the See by which it was originally conferred; for if, as the English Church teaches,

* Bedæ Hist. Eccl. I. c. 29.

“the bishop of Rome neither hath, nor ought to have, any jurisdiction in this realm of England,” then he had no power to confer any on St. Augustin; and if that original grant was nugatory, all that flows from it must be nugatory also.

And, in fact, when we read the history of the Reformation, we find that a principle was at that period introduced into the English Church, by which her claim to obedience was rested on a basis totally different from that of Apostolical descent. In 1535, Henry VIII. issued out “letters of inhibition,” forbidding, “*auctoritate suâ supremâ ecclesiasticâ*,” the archbishops and bishops, “*ea quæ sunt jurisdictionis exercere* ;” “and thus,” says the historian of your Church,* “all episcopal jurisdiction was laid asleep, and almost struck dead by the Regale during the king’s pleasure.” The same historian had told us, in the preceding page, how the archbishop of Canterbury began to make his metropolitcal visitation, but did not “venture upon this branch of jurisdiction without the king’s license, for now the bishops could do little without an authority from the crown.” In fact, the bishops had already taken out a commission in the following terms: “Whereas all authority of jurisdiction, and indeed jurisdiction altogether, as well that which is called ecclesiastical, as that which is secular, emanated at first from the royal power, as from the supreme head,” &c. And in the beginning of king Edward’s reign, new commissions of the same tenor and form were again taken

* Collier iv. 297. 254, &c.

out by the same bishops;* and the commission for Cranmer's archbishopric is thus exprest: "We will that thou shouldest *take our stead* in the manner and form below mentioned, and shouldest *be licensed to ordain* within thy diocese of Canterbury." Thus the power of ordination, and all other branches of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, were to be conferred by the king, and to be executed "*vice, nomine, et auctoritate ejus.*" Later still, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, "the whole compass of Church discipline was again transferred upon the crown;"† and archbishop Parker did homage in these words: "I, Matthew Parker, D.D., acknowledge and confess to have and to hold the said archbishopric of Canterbury, and the possessions of the same entirely, as well the spiritualities as temporalities thereof, *only* of your majesty and crown royal;" to which document is added as an appendix: "We also, whose names be under written, being bishops of the several bishoprics within your majesty's realm, do testify, declare, and acknowledge all and every part of the premises in like manner as the Right Reverend Father in God, the archbishop of Canterbury, has done." In a word, the Church of England, at the period of the Reformation, distinctly recognized the civil sovereign, not merely as the supreme governor, but also as the sole fountain of ecclesiastical jurisdiction: so that, to use the words of Lord Coke, "all the Church's laws are aptly and rightly called the king's ecclesiastical laws of England;" or, as

* Collier, v. 179, &c.

† Ibid. vi. 224. ix. 331.

Lord Chief Justice Hale has it, “her jurisdiction is from the crown, and her laws are under its laws—*lex sub graviore lege.*”

Now what was the admission of this principle, but a distinct relinquishment of all claim to authority as derived from the apostles, and an acceptance of it at the hands of a power altogether different? a breaking off, in fact, of the Church of England from that Universal Church of which the successors of the apostles are the appointed rulers, to make it a mere appendage to a particular state, with the crown for its source of jurisdiction and centre of unity; thus subordinating the ecclesiastical to the secular, the spiritual to the natural, the divine to the human. For though you may say that the state is a divine ordinance as well as the Church, “there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God;” yet you cannot deny that it is a distinct ordinance, and instituted for ends altogether different; and (which is the particular point we are now considering,) when our Lord gave His commission to His apostles, so far from directing them to the powers of this world for its ratification, He distinctly warned them it must be executed in direct opposition to those powers, even unto death. And we know from history that it has been so executed; St. Peter and St. Paul sought not at the hands of Nero the gift of spiritual jurisdiction, before they preached the Gospel in his dominions; St. Athanasius was not slack in the fulfilment of his commission because of the opposition of princes; St. Ambrose*

* Church of the Fathers, pp. 8. 21.

bade the Emperor "not embarrass himself with the thought that he had an emperor's right over sacred things, for that he was not *over* the Church, but *within* it;" St. Bernard was not more subservient to the Duke of Aquitaine, nor our own St. Thomas of Canterbury to the second Henry.

In the Church of England on the contrary, ever since the Reformation, subserviency to the State has been one of its most prominent characteristics; it has been a living energetic principle, growing and spreading itself abroad unchecked, and producing all those moral consequences, which one would have naturally expected from it. Look at the declaration of "the judicious Hooker,"* that "it ought to be the true inscription, style or title of all churches as yet standing within this realm, By the goodness of Almighty God and His servant Elizabeth we are." Look at the dedication to James the First, still prefixed to the English translation of the Bible, in which that Queen is styled "the bright occidental star," and his Majesty "the sun in his strength," titles which to Catholic ears sound almost blasphemous; look at the State services; that for King Charles the Martyr, for instance, in which the cause of the king is absolutely identified with that of our Lord, the Gospel selected being the parable of the husbandmen in the vineyard, who slew their master's messengers, and then his son; or that for the fifth of November, in which thanks are given to God for "bringing His Majesty King William for the deliverance of our Church and Nation,"

* Book v. Preface.

“to preserve us from the attempts of our enemies to bereave us of our religion and laws,” “our religion and liberties,” &c. And in that for the 29th of May, there is the same perpetual union of “this Church and Kingdom,” “the Monarchy and God’s Church,” “true religion and worship together with our former peace and prosperity;” just in the same temper as King Charles the Second’s first parliament declared the episcopal government to be “most agreeable to the word of God and most suitable to Monarchy.”* So also in the Litany, after the prayer for the Holy Church Universal, comes the prayer for the Queen and Royal Family, before that for the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and it is the same in the order of Morning and Evening Prayer. You will say, perhaps; that these forms, or at least the State services, are imposed on the Church by the State, and do not indicate any thing of the spirit of the Church herself; but look further at the religious biography of England since the Reformation, I mean especially of the High-Church party. Read the history and writings, for instance, of Archbishop Laud, whom you would yourself cite as the very type of the mind of the Church of England in the 17th century: is not his love for the Church indissolubly bound up with his love for the King, or rather are not the two ideas so fused together in his mind as to be absolutely identical? In fact, with him and some others, one would almost think that this intense devotion to the Crown had been one main obstacle in the way of their receiving

* Collier viii. 486.

the Catholic faith, towards which they were, on many points, inclined: it seems as if they could conceive of nothing more sacred than the "divinity which doth hedge a king:" and as if the very idea of the Church involved that of the throne as its central point of vitality; so that all the religiousness of their nature, so to speak, was concentrated and dried up in this worship of the Cæsar. Well might the good Bishop Andrewes pray to be kept from "making gods of kings!"* And even now, though enthusiasm for the crown is no longer the form it assumes, the same national and secularizing spirit is the leading principle in the main body of the Church of England; the many cling to it, because it is the Church by law established, the Church of the wealthy and the educated, the Church of the English nation, as such; "Church and State" have become in their minds a blended idea, and thus "they uphold the Church" from an instinctive feeling of loyalty,—not to the "dynasty of the Apostles," but to the State of England.

You will answer that, be this as it may, the Roman Church is, after all, in this country an intruding Church; that the whole English Church accepted the Reformation under Queen Elizabeth, and continued conformable until the famous bull was issued in 1570, when a certain party detached themselves from it; that the National Church continued its succession of bishops unbroken, and in undisputed possession of the ancient sees, while the Roman party, in process of time, gathered round certain foreign

* *Prec. Quot.* p. 190. ed. 1827.

priests and bishops, sent from Rome with no English sees, who are therefore in the position of intruders, they and their faction having separated from the National Church, not it from them.

Now, in the first place, it cannot be truly said that the whole English Church did receive the Reformation, seeing that, when the oath of supremacy was tendered in Queen Elizabeth's reign, *every single bishop, excepting one only, refused to take it,** and were all, in consequence, ejected from their sees; surely this protest of her episcopate, together with their consequent deprivation, seems much like the death-pang of the English Church; or rather like those mysterious sounds, "Let us depart," which boded the approaching downfall of the ancient temple. The convocation too had drawn up a Catholic profession of faith,† which was subscribed by both Universities, and, together with a protest against the royal supremacy, presented to the House of Lords; and though the inferior clergy, for the most part, afterwards conformed, yet it must be remembered that, by so doing, they broke their vows of canonical obedience to their bishops. Moreover, very many of them only conformed provisionally, as it were, hoping that things would take some favourable turn; and not a few went so far as to continue saying mass in private, while they used the communion service in public. Perhaps, too, you are hardly aware how far the compliance of the nation was the result of coer-

* Collier vi. 250.

† Lingard, vol. v. c. 3. p. 153. ed. 4.

cion and violence ; nor by how stringent a system of persecution, the Catholic spirit was crushed down in this country for many generations. As early as 1560, (that is, ten years before the bull in question was issued,) a penalty of £20. a month, (equal, of course, to a much larger sum now,*) was already exacted from all who were not present at worship after the established form : and an act had been passed,† that if any one should say or hear mass, he should, for the first offence, forfeit all his goods ; for the second, suffer banishment ; and for the third, death. In 1563, the emperor Ferdinand wrote letters to the Queen, respecting the sufferings of the English Catholics ; and indeed many families had been obliged to fly the kingdom ; many noble persons had been thrown into prison, and before the end of her reign, more than 120 priests, besides laymen and women, had suffered martyrdom for their faith. You can scarcely call such a forced compliance as this was, an acceptance of the new religion.

But, even if it were otherwise, even if it were true that the English Church had accepted the Reformation, yet this could not in any way affect the Apostolicity of the Roman Church in this country : for suppose a National Church should become Arian, for instance, all its bishops and clergy to a man heading the apostacy, and that the See of Rome should send forth bishops and priests

* Cobbett says, equal to £250. ; those who could not pay were imprisoned or banished.

† Collier vi. p. 321.

into that land to reclaim its people to the ancient faith; finding it convenient, moreover, to send them not as an established hierarchy, but as a Missionary Church "in partibus infidelium," I am sure you would not yourself doubt that such a Church would be the Apostolic Church of the land, though without the ancient sees; and supposing further that the Pope had waited for a while, unwilling to interfere prematurely, and hoping that the National Church would recant its errors, and return to the communion of the faithful, surely this would in no way alter the case. It is idle then to deny the Apostolicity of the Roman Church in this kingdom, simply on the ground of *intrusion*; when you must know that the question between us lies very much deeper. It is mere unreality to talk of the English and Roman Churches as rival communions, with no important point at issue between them, but that of rightful jurisdiction in this country; for if the Roman be a true Church anywhere, she is the only true Church here; for such she is, according to her own theory, and if that theory is false, she is a false Church everywhere. The two Churches are antagonist bodies, representing antagonist principles, and holding antagonist systems of faith; and, therefore, laying aside all question of succession or jurisdiction, they cannot, here or any where, be both apostolical.

For you will readily admit that the apostolical succession is not only the channel of sacramental grace, but also the guarantee for the faithful transmission of all Christian truth, and that therefore the maintenance of Apostolic doctrine is one inalienable mark of an

Apostolical Church; in fact, were it otherwise, the Jacobite, Eutychian, and other heretical communions are all Apostolical Churches. Now in this particular, the case of the Church of England stands thus; she cannot claim Apostolicity on the ground of a regular transmission of Apostolic doctrine from bishop to bishop within her fold; since, as she would herself allow, her present bishops teach a doctrine on many points diametrically opposed to that which was taught by St. Augustine, from whom they profess to derive their commission to teach, and by his successors for many centuries: more especially as this discrepancy is not the result of silent and gradual change, but of a sudden convulsion, one set of bishops teaching the doctrines they had received from their fathers, and their immediate successors denouncing that system as corrupt, and teaching another absolutely contradictory to it. The Church of England, therefore, is either herself not Apostolic, or she is the only Apostolic Church in the world, since there is none other with which she agrees in doctrine. In a word, even if her orders and spiritual jurisdiction were admitted, her claim to Apostolicity must still be judged by her possession or lack of the other notes of the true Church; if she be One, Holy, and Catholic, and have besides an Episcopate deriving orders and jurisdiction from the Apostles, then she must be Apostolic also; but if any one of those other notes is lacking to her, the possession of such an Episcopate cannot of itself make her Apostolic.

If, however, we would determine, by the simple light of reason and common sense, which Church

may rightly claim the title of Apostolic, as the true representative of the Church of the Apostles, we must recal to our minds an idea which is almost forgotten by English churchmen in general, and which even those of your school have scarcely considered with the attention it deserves; I mean the idea of the Church as a *kingdom*. You know that many who recognize the Church as the treasure-house of divine truth for the instruction of the faithful, and of divine grace for their justification, overlook its further claim to be at the same time the treasure-house of divine power for their rule and governance. Yet all acknowledge that our Blessed Lord is not only the Prophet and Priest of His people, but also their King, and you, at least, would not shrink from confessing His Church to be His perfect representative upon earth. And further, a moment's reflection will remind us how uniformly it is spoken of in Scripture, not as a literature, or a philosophy, or simply a religion, but as a *kingdom*. As such it appeared in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, side by side with the great visible kingdoms, which have successively held dominion over the world;—it was foretold of our Lord that “the government should be upon His shoulder,” that He should “sit on the throne of His father David,” and that “of His kingdom there should be no end;”—in the Psalms and Prophets the Church is set forth as a kingdom into which all nations should flow, and before which all the powers of this world should bow down to the very dust; nay, the Jewish Church, in which the Christian Church existed in embryo, was itself a kingdom; and when our Lord

sent His Apostles forth to preach the gospel, they preached, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;"—as the "kingdom of heaven," He Himself sets it forth in all His parables;—and St. Paul constantly speaks of it as the "kingdom of Christ," "the kingdom of God's dear Son;"—moreover we cannot but see, that in the Apostolic times it was a compact and visible society, governed by its own rulers and its own laws, gathering into itself "the elect" from divers nations, and altogether independent of any of the powers of this world. Now if, as the Anglican theory would have it, the Church in each nation has really no necessary dependence on the Church in any other nation, but is a part and parcel of the constitution of the realm, and hangs on the throne as its supreme authority, in what sense can the Church be called a kingdom? and, if it be not a kingdom, why is it always so represented in Scripture? Of course if nothing existed, answering to the "sure word of prophecy," if the Church were every where thus merged in the State, one should conclude that the obvious meaning of Scripture in this matter is not the true one; but you know well that there is a kingdom claiming to be this "kingdom of heaven;" a kingdom whose internal polity is the wonder of mankind; whose reproach it is in the eyes of the world, that its rulers have humbled to the dust the pride of princes; which has undergone many vicissitudes, and risen again living and triumphant, as "fated not to die;" nay, of which its very enemies feel that it has within it the principle of enduring existence. Hear the testimony rendered

by one of them,* and then judge whether this be not the kingdom, which, as the prophets speak, shall “stand for ever.” “The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs;—the Republic of Venice is modern when compared with the Papacy;—and the Republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains;—the Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour. The Catholic Church is still sending forth, to the farthest ends of the world, missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. She saw the commencement of all the governments, and of all the ecclesiastical establishments which exist in the world, *and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all.* She was great and respected before the Saxon set foot in Britain.....She may still exist in undiminished vigour, when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge, to sketch the ruins of St. Paul’s.’†

* Macaulay’s Essays, vol. 3. p. 207.

† See Mr. Close’s very remarkable sermon, (The Mystery of Iniquity, Nov. 5, 1845.) in which he bears similar testimony to the “marvellous history” of the Roman Church, at which “even the men of this world, her historians, politicians, and philosophers stand amazed.” He comments with great truth and force upon its unity, diffusiveness, wonderful polity, its capabilities of universal adaptation, “its marvellous tenacity of life under the most adverse circumstances, and the buoyancy with which it has again and again risen, when it appeared to be finally submerged;” and from all these things draws the very just conclusion, that it will

LETTER X.

I HAVE thus endeavoured, with all fairness and truth, to test the English communion by those four notes of the true Church, which are set before us in the Nicene Creed ; and I think I have proved that to neither of them can she successfully lay claim ;—that so far from being One, either with the rest of Christendom, or with herself, her alienation from every other communion and her internal discord are proverbial ; that the spiritual life in its higher forms, in which alone it deserves the name of Sanctity, is unknown to her ; that so far from being Catholic, it is her very boast that she is national ; and that, instead of ruling with an Apostolically-derived authority, she has professedly received her jurisdiction from the English crown. I have also endeavoured to express my own undoubting conviction, that there is a Church, and one only, to which all these notes apply ;—whose Unity is the marvel of the world ; which teems in every age with multitudes walking in the

never be destroyed, and that it is “no contrivance of human skill or ingenuity, but the work of a superior power.” Like ourselves too, he considers all this a fulfilment of prophecy.

The whole sermon would well repay a most careful perusal : but how the author disposes of the note of *sanctity*, which was an undeniable characteristic in so many of the most devoted servants of this “mystery of iniquity,” it is impossible to conjecture. Indeed, if his theory were true, the purpose of the New Dispensation has been all but wholly frustrated, and Satan has won the mastery over Christ.

varied paths of Christian perfection ; which embraces in her wide bosom all nations, peoples and languages, countless in numbers and unrivalled in extent ; and whose sway, transmitted from hand to hand, is derived from no earthly potentate, but from the Prince of the Apostles, who received it from Jesus Christ Himself.

It only remains then to say a few words in answer to some of the main objections which you urge against the argument I have used, or rather against the conclusion to which I would bring you.

You say, in the first place, that, whether or not the four notes we have been considering really apply to Rome, still there are difficulties in her doctrines which you cannot get over, because some of them appear to you to be “plainly unscriptural.” Now surely, such an objection is inconsistent with the admission which you have made all along, of your belief in a visible Church, the authorised exponent of divine truth ; you professed to have no doubt as to the existence of such a Church, and only to desire to find out whether it is the Church of Rome or the Church of England. To attempt the solution of this problem by an examination of their respective systems of doctrine, is in fact to prejudge the case, to suppose ourselves already in possession of that very truth which it is their office to impart. Our duty in the matter must be simply to examine the various outward tokens or other credentials which they can respectively allege, and when we have determined from these, to the best of our judgment, which of the two is the Church of God, to receive the in-

structions of that Church with glad and unquestioning docility. The legitimate office of private judgment is to choose our teacher; when it pretends to decide on the matter taught, it oversteps its province, and nothing but confusion and uncertainty can be the result. For, after all, when you call Roman doctrine unscriptural, you are necessarily comparing it, not with scripture itself, but with your own interpretation of scripture. The Church of Rome admits, as fully as you can do, the inspiration of the holy volume, but she claims to be its sole infallible interpreter; she contends, moreover, that all her doctrines are to be found therein, if not on the surface, open to any casual observer, yet latent and discoverable to the eye of faith; if not in their minute details and present systematized form, yet in their broad general principles: she has set the seal of her authority on a large body of interpretation, which she has gathered, from age to age, from the meditations of her learned doctors and holy contemplatives; and it is to this sanctioned interpretation that you oppose your own.

Surely, if the outward testimony in favour of Rome be strong, as you admit that it is, it is something of a risk to withhold your obedience on a ground such as this; you can hardly think it safe to trust your own mind as the rule of Scriptural interpretation: more especially as you must be conscious how greatly your views of Scripture have changed and developed from time to time; how many important doctrines you once overlooked, which now seem to you so plainly written in its pages that you wonder you did not see them before, doctrines which you received originally

perhaps from some other source, but of which you find more and more confirmation in your Bible every time you open it : so that you can hardly be sure that, as your inward light increases, you may not see that doctrines which you cannot yet discover in God's Word are nevertheless there. Can then such a shifting rule as the individual judgment of each man be a safe rule of faith? Will not one person be able to solve difficulties and reconcile contradictions more fully than another? and is every one to stand on different ground, each following his own view, according to their respective success in making all things consistent? or would not this be at once destructive of the very possibility of unity? You must know too from history, and perhaps from experience, that if you once admit private interpretation of Scripture, controversies can have no end : that, even in the days of the Apostles, the Word of God was combated out of the Word of God ; and that, ever since that time, in all discussions conducted on this principle, there has been "but one learned (or unlearned) interpretation opposed to another, man standing against man, and the Bible on both sides." Moreover, you yourself repudiate the principle in arguing with Dissenters; you do not hold them justified in separating, or continuing separate, from the Church of England because many of her doctrines appear to them contrary to the plain word of Scripture. Yet, wherein does their case differ from yours? Nay, is not the case of both too parallel to that of the infidel, who says that, whatever may be the weight of external evidence adduced in favour of Christianity, its system of doctrine appears to him so

contrary to reason and experience, that he cannot receive it. Truly I cannot but think that the temper of mind which now leads men to withhold their obedience from Rome, while acknowledging the strength of the outward testimony by which her claims are supported, until they are satisfied as to every particular of her doctrine, would also, if Christianity were now preached to them for the first time, hold them back from baptism, until they had investigated and distinctly convinced themselves of the truth of each individual article of the faith. In both these cases, it may be that they are unwittingly excluding themselves for ever from the knowledge which they desire, because the very obedience which they thus withhold may have been appointed by God as the one condition of its attainment.

Besides, are you quite sure that you rightly apprehend the doctrines to which you object? What means have you taken to ascertain their real import, and the relative positions they occupy in the Roman Creed? Have you studied Catholic catechisms and other theological works, listened to Catholic sermons, or consulted Catholic priests? I think I may venture to assume that you have done none of these things; but that your impression of Roman Catholic doctrines has been taken mainly from the representation given of them in the works of Protestant controversialists. Many will not even listen to what is said on this subject by their own nearest friends and relations who have become Catholics. Yet what would they think of the sincerity of a Socinian or other dissenter, who, denouncing the doctrines of the Church of England as unscriptural, should refuse to hear

what any Anglican clergyman has to say in explanation or defence of them, and should persist in receiving the interpretation given of them by the minister of his own persuasion? The dread of personal influence which has, in so many instances, raised a barrier between the Catholic converts and their late most intimate friends, seems to me altogether inexplicable on any acknowledged principle of candour or justice.

But you say further, that Roman doctrine is not only contradictory to Scripture, but also to natural conscience. This would indeed be a fearful objection, if it were true: for if there were upon earth a system, endued like the Roman with wisdom, power, and fascination, which friends and enemies alike acknowledge as superhuman, and yet using that power and wisdom to inculcate a body of doctrine in the main contradictory to conscience — how could we deem of such a system otherwise than as the organ of our great enemy? but you do not pretend that, *in the main*, the Roman system contradicts natural conscience, because you admit the pre-eminent holiness of her saints, the blessedness of her religious institutions, and even the excellence of the moral training which she affords to all her children: surely, then, you ought to feel that the chances are, that, if any of her doctrines appear to you thus repugnant to conscience, it is because you misunderstand them. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?”

You do not specify the doctrines to which you object; I can only surmise that you allude to that which authorises the invocation of saints, because

there is no other about which I can even conceive your so feeling. Let us, then, look at this doctrine fairly for a few moments, and consider whether you are not deceiving yourself in supposing that your objections to it spring from conscience, and also whether the objections themselves are really such as ought to outweigh the external evidence which we have adduced in favour of the Roman Church. You say that it offends your natural sense of right and wrong to offer to your fellow-men the same homage which you offer to Almighty God. In this all must agree; the only question between us is, whether the homage which Catholics pay to the saints is the same which they pay to Almighty God; and this, being a question of fact, is in no way within the cognizance of conscience. We contend, moreover, that the fact is otherwise; that the very matter of our prayers to them (being an entreaty that they will pray to God for us) distinctly recognizes their position as creatures like ourselves, absolutely dependent on Almighty God, only higher in His favour, because sinless and in His more immediate presence. But, you will say, to pray to saints at all, with whatever intention, is in itself idolatrous, because, by so doing, we ascribe to them omnipresence, which is an incommunicable attribute of Deity. Here, again, the question becomes one simply of fact—namely, whether or not there is reason to believe that God permits any of His creatures to be so far partakers of His omnipresence as to be ubiquitous to us, or at least, in some way or other, capable of communicating with us, though not within the sphere of our senses; and it is clear that the point must be decided by some other

faculty than conscience, since conscience confessedly cannot pronounce any judgment as to the existence or non-existence of a fact, but can only direct us as to the moral duties or obligations which arise out of that fact. Thus, if the fact that the saints and angels have the power of hearing our prayers, and interceding for us with God, were in any way made certain to our minds, conscience might then determine whether or not we ought to ask their intercession; and I cannot but think that conscience would decide in favour of such a practice, or at least would in no way condemn it. We all eagerly ask the prayers of those of our friends whom we love and revere, and as we know that the prayers of "the just made perfect" must needs be more acceptable than any that can be offered here, it would surely be but a natural instinct to ask for such in our behalf, if we were once assured that we are heard by the saints above as readily as by our friends on earth. To say that by so doing we trench on the office of the One Intercessor is idle, for, whether we ask the intercessions of friends on earth or in heaven, the principle is the same.

But let us look for a moment into the question of fact, and consider whether or not the idea that the saints may hear us is contrary to reason. In the first place, we know by experience that beings, not absolutely omnipresent, may yet be relatively so—as, for instance, you yourself might be ubiquitous to an ant-hill; and what proportion the capacities of glorified spirits bear to those we at present possess, we have no means of even forming a conjecture; and, in fact, to attempt to argue concerning them from anything we know of our own, is as though a caterpillar should apply

the laws of its own being to that of a butterfly. Because by the laws of nature certain limits are imposed on our powers of perceiving, does it follow that the perceptions of disembodied spirits are subject to the same laws? What a cloud of mystery enwraps even our present selves! so that, when we speculate for a moment on those powers of perceiving and communicating which we daily exercise, we are at once compelled to confess ourselves "most ignorant of what we are most assured;" how utterly inscrutable then to us, in this our embryo state, must be the whole subject of spiritual existence; and how idle it is to argue upon it, as if we understood its nature or its laws! The faculties of the spirit on its liberation from this body of clay, may be suddenly developed to an extent utterly beyond our present powers of conceiving. We have surely, then, no grounds in reason for considering it impossible that the saints may hear our prayers.

And if we turn to Scripture, we find it distinctly mentioned that the angels are in some way present with us; we are told that they are "ministering spirits, sent to minister to such as shall be heirs of salvation;" that "there is joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth;" and practically all Protestants believe in the ubiquity of evil spirits, who are after all but fallen angels; and if angels are thus present with us, why not saints? In a parable of our Lord, spirits are represented as conversing with each other even across the great gulf which separates Abraham's bosom from the place of torment, and we are told in the book of Revelation,* that the souls of the

* Chap. vi. 10.

martyrs have knowledge of what passes upon earth.

I can readily understand, however, that these considerations from reason, and even these indications from Scripture, may not appear to you sufficient in themselves to sanction the practice of invocation; that you may feel the need of some authority explicitly to assure us that we have a right, as Christians, to the prayers of the whole family, in heaven, as well as on earth, before we venture to claim such a privilege; that to address the saints without such an authority may seem a rash and overbold intrusion into the secrets of the world unseen: and I cannot but fancy it may be some feeling of this sort which makes you say that invocation of saints is against your conscience; but though it may be against your conscience to practise it without authority, it does not follow that it would be against your conscience to practise it under authority; for instance, if Almighty God should speak to you as He did to the friends of Job, commanding you to ask the prayers of His servants in your behalf, it would not then be against your conscience to do so; and just such an authority to her children is the Catholic Church, nay, the self-same authority, for she is to them the voice of God on earth. If, then, it be the want of authority which makes you feel that the practice of invocation would be sinful in your own case, that feeling is no argument against the Catholic Church, because if you were once (on other grounds) convinced of her authority, it would pass away. That she sanctions what, unsanctioned, would be wrong, simply because unsanctioned, is no more than is true of Christianity itself. What soul would

dare, without authority, to place herself in those dear and intimate relations with her God, to which the religion of Jesus entitles her; through the blood of Jesus we have access to the most holy place, where we should otherwise be aliens and intruders.

You will say, perhaps, that, though an accurate statement of the doctrine in question is harmless, and its practice by people of education not idolatrous, yet that its *tendencies* are mischievous, and that it is sure to be misapprehended by the ignorant; but to this the answer is obvious: every revealed doctrine may be said in like manner to have dangerous tendencies, because, if it were taken out of its proper place, magnified into undue proportions, and made the arbitrary centre of a theological system, it would necessarily result in evil; the very doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead, thus severed from the rest of the Christian system, has had its development in pure Theism; it is the Socinian objection to the doctrine of the Trinity that it *tends* to Polytheism; in the minds of some heretics the Divinity of our Lord has absorbed His Humanity; by others the error has been reversed; it is idle, then, to talk of dangerous tendencies in this or that Catholic doctrine, until you have duly considered its relations to every other part of the Catholic system. It is most true that the invocation of saints would be fraught with dangerous tendencies, if it were transplanted into Protestantism; with us it has its proper place, and finds all the corrective which it needs in other doctrines and practices no less stringently enforced. As to its being rightly understood by the poor, I can only say that it is most clearly stated in all the Catechisms which they learn, and in

point of fact it would be a far less difficult task to find fifty English churchmen either grossly ignorant or heretical on the subject of the Trinity, than to find one Catholic whose devotion to the Blessed Virgin, or any other of the saints, can really be called idolatrous.

You must allow me to say further, that it is manifest to Catholics that one cause of the instinctive dread with which Protestants seem to shrink from praying to the saints is, that they have no idea of any higher worship than prayer, to God Himself. Now, the supreme act of adoration with which the Catholic Church approaches Almighty God is the Christian sacrifice, in which she offers up to Him the body and blood of his dear Son. This, as the meanest Catholic knows, is the especial honour which may not be given to another; he knows as well as St. Augustin* himself, that though “he must celebrate the memories of the saints with religious solemnity, both that he may be excited to follow their examples, and also that he may become a partaker in their merits and be benefited by their prayers, yet he may not build an altar to any of them, but only to their God, though still in their memory;” “neither may a priest be consecrated, nor sacrifices offered, to any but the Lord our God.”

But you sum up all your objections by saying, in conclusion, that even if you were convinced that the Roman Communion is in every respect superior to the English, you should still feel that you had no right to choose a Church for yourself on the ground of such superiority: that your allegiance is due to

* Cont. Faust. Lib. xx. Tom. viii. p. 544. D. De Civ. Dei. viii. 27. Tom. vii. p. 350. B.

the Church of your baptism; and that you cannot help giving great weight to the fact, that it is not by your own will, but by the Providence of God that you are placed where you are; whereas, if you change your position, it must be by a decided act of your own, dictated by your own private judgment, and therefore involving a tremendous responsibility.

All these objections, my dear friend, are based on an assumption of the very point in dispute, or rather on a misconception of the scope of my whole argument. I am not urging you to forsake one communion and select another on the ground of its ideal superiority; neither is it for the sake of Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity in themselves, that we have been examining whether they belong to Rome or to England, but because they are tokens of something beyond themselves. Whenever you recite the Nicene Creed, you declare your belief in One Church, (not two,) which Church you further define as being Holy, Catholic and Apostolic; and therefore what I have endeavoured to set before you is,—not that these four qualities being in themselves beautiful, the Body in which they exist must be more beautiful than that to which they are lacking, but that as, according to your own confession, they are the appointed notes of the True Church, you are bound to acknowledge the Body in which they are found to be the True Church; and as Unity is one of those notes, you are bound to denounce every other Body, whatever its pretensions may be, as no Church at all. The question then is, not which is the *best* Church, but which is the *true* Church; all our en-

quiries must concentrate themselves on this one point of *authority*.

To talk of the Church of your baptism is simply to beg the question: for what is the Church of your Baptism? According to the teaching of the Universal Church ever since the days of St. Cyprian, every person receiving baptism rightly,* whether at the hand of priest or layman, man or woman, Catholic or heretic, is baptized into the Catholic Church; so that when any, who from ignorance or perverseness have strayed from her pastures either by schism or by any other sin, are by God's grace reclaimed, she receives them, not as strangers come to her for the first time from the land of the enemy, but as lost sheep returning to their own fold, as the son in the Gospel, "who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found." Surely, you do not yourself look on your baptism as something purely local and national; you do not consider that one baptized by a Presbyterian or a Wesleyan, would forsake "the Church of his Baptism" by becoming an Anglican;

* The conditional rebaptization of converts, of which so much has been lately said, has no reference whatever to the character of the person who originally baptized, but to the doubtful *manner* of the baptism; and when we consider that it has been customary in some large towns to baptize by aspersion forty or fifty children at a time as they lay in their nurses' arms, reciting the form of words once only for all; that, elsewhere, children have been *baptized without water, &c.*, we cannot wonder at the holy caution of the Church in again administering that essential rite only *sub conditione*. By a strange inconsistency, the journal which has been most instrumental in bringing these practices to the knowledge of English churchmen, has also been most loud in its complaints against the necessary consequence of them; it first throws serious doubts upon the validity of the baptism of thousands, and then complains that the Catholic Church takes precautions to remove those doubts by supplying all possible defects.

the true Church wherever that be, and no other, must needs be to every Christian the Church of his Baptism; she is his real mother, to whom all his affections are due, though it may be that a stranger stole him from her even in his cradle, and has brought him up in ignorance of his royal descent and rightful heritage. Labour then to discover the true Church, and in her you will have discovered the Church of your Baptism.

When you say further, that you dare not leave your present position because you are placed in it by Providence, you are using an argument, which, as I know, is at this moment keeping back numbers from joining the Roman Church; numbers too, I fear, who are not all like yourself still in serious doubt, but of whom many are almost, if not altogether, convinced of the validity of her claims: it is an argument too which easily insinuates itself into the mind, because the feeling in which it originates bears the semblance of humility, resignation, and obedient waiting upon God; but when we come to examine it, as an argument, we see at once that it is worth nothing. In the first place, it proves too much; if you would be wrong in joining the Roman Church because you find yourself at present out of it, a convert from any religious system to any other must be wrong also: for there are none who may not consider themselves to have been placed where they happen to be by Providence. All the early converts to Christianity itself belonged to some system or other—the Jewish converts to one which they knew to be divine. And, in the second place, it begs the question; for if the Church of Rome be the true Church, (which is the very point in dis-

pute,) it is absolutely impossible that it should be the will of God that any should continue, knowingly, in disobedience to her: just as though all men are not made Christians in their infancy, yet you cannot doubt that it is the will of God they should become so if they have the opportunity. It is, of course, no argument against the *truth* of the Church of Rome, that we were not educated within her pale; neither is it any excuse for our refusing to acknowledge that truth, if it is by any means brought home to our minds: and if we do acknowledge it, and yet say that we will remain external to her, and do our duty where we are, surely we are entangled in a subtle form of self-righteousness, going about to “establish our own righteousness,” instead of submitting to the “righteousness which is of God by faith.” Thus we are still brought back to the single question, into which everything in this matter resolves itself: Which is the true Church?

The fact is, you wish to escape from the responsibility of making a choice, but that cannot be; you can no more put from you this responsibility, than you can cast off your own identity; the choice you must make, and whatever it be, you must make it at your peril. You are keenly alive to the risk on the side of submitting to the Church of Rome, but is there not an equal risk in rejecting her? Nay, considering the magnitude of her claim as compared with that of the Church of England, is not this risk incalculably the greater? For it is an idle dream to imagine that you do not yourself personally reject her, by passively acquiescing in her rejection by your forefathers. Now that the question has been by God’s

providence brought before your mind, if you refuse to submit to her, you do reject her as distinctly, deliberately, and wilfully, as if you had led the revolt against her three hundred years ago. Any how, whether you submit or refuse submission, it is equally the act of your own will, the result of your own private judgment. Before you stand two rival claimants, each announcing herself to be the Herald of the Most High; and it is binding upon you, as you would save your soul, fairly to examine their respective claims and to decide between them; and that, without any regard to the accidents of your birth and education, or indeed to anything whatever but simply the merits of the question itself; and when you have so decided, you are bound to act on your decision without reserve or delay.

And now, my dear friend, “*Si quid novisti rectius istis, Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.*” Show me any other more trustworthy tokens than those we have been examining, whereby the true Church of God may be known, and which belong to England rather than to Rome; or else, consider these well, and follow them faithfully wherever they may lead you. Shrink not back because of any evil report which you may have heard, and which the enemy of your soul will not be slow in suggesting to you; say not with Nathanaël, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” unless like him, you are ready also to “come and see.” If you do this, then, like him, will you be rewarded—Oh! how abundantly. He came, and instantly recognized the “Son of God, the King of Israel;” and in like manner, she, who now seems to you as that despised

Nazareth, will, it may be, when you have once entered within her walls, shine forth as the city of the Apocalypse, of which it is spoken, that “the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

You will not, I know, receive our testimony; I do not ask that you should, excepting only as a corroboration of the outward testimony of facts; I only desire to balance our experience against your suspicions. Yours are impressions arising from vague hearsay; you know, concerning the Church to which we have submitted ourselves, that in this country “it is every where spoken against;” we know that we have found in her the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price; that she hath given us the bread of life and the oil of gladness; that she hath poured into our souls that peace which passeth all understanding; in a word, that we have found in her a home, such as we never found elsewhere, a counsellor, a friend, a guide, a mother; and it is because we so value these blessings, that we are loud and earnest in our entreaties that you may be made a partaker in them. “Forbid us not,” says St. Augustine,* “forbid us not to seek thee; this prohibition is agreeable to that perverseness whereby we were separated, not to that charity wherein we are still brethren; we seek our brother and make intercession to God for him, not saying, ‘Master, speak to my brother that he divide his inheritance with me,’ but ‘speak to him that he may share mine.’”

* In Ps. xviii. Enarr. ii. 6. Tom. iv. p. 121. C.



